GERHART HAUPTMANN

DRAMATIC WORKS

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Hauptmann, G. J. R.
The dramatic work of
Gerhart Hauptmann

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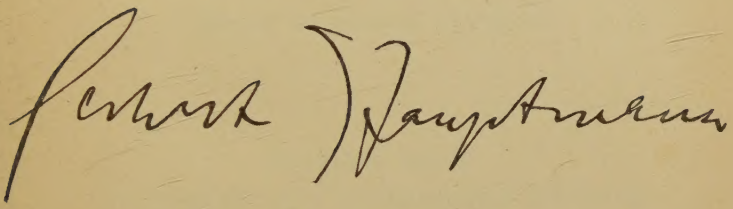

VOLUME FIVE:

SCHLUCK AND JAU
AND PIPPA DANCES
CHARLEMAGNE'S HOSTAGE

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN

(AUTHORIZED EDITION)

EDITED BY LUDWIG LEWISOHN

VOLUME FIVE: SYMBOLIC AND LEGENDARY DRAMAS

NEW YORK
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19545

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The second group of Hauptmann's Symbolic and Legendary Dramas gains unity by a recognisable oneness of inspiration. The poet has become a seeker; he questions the nature and quality of various ultimate values; he abandons the field of the personal and individual life and "sends his soul into the infinite." A number of passages, characters and actions in both *The Sunken Bell* and *Henry of Auë* stand out more memorably and massively than anything in these later plays. It may be fairly argued, however, that Hauptmann has never shown himself more truly a poet who partakes of the central traditions of European literature than in *Schluck and Jau* (1899) and in *And Pippa Dances* (1906).

Those traditions are most clearly followed in *Schluck and Jau*. Not only had Calderon and Grillparzer written plays on the subject of Life a Dream, but there blends with that subject in Hauptmann's play the great, sad mood which the Renaissance summed up by the word Mutability. Not, perhaps, since Shakespeare himself, has any poet expressed that mood so clearly as Hauptmann in the last description of the sorry Jau back in his ditch.

"An instance, so it please thee,
Of earthly Fortune's transitoriness!

The mighty Macedonian Alexander's
Descendants in a few brief years became
Scriveners and carpenters at Rome. This bundle
Of thrice-patched fustian stalked upon earth's stage
But yesterday a king."

Even through the medium of translation the Shakespearian mood and rhythm are discernible here. And, as a matter of fact, Hauptmann went to Shakespeare for the whole framework of his comedy. The trick played upon Christopher Sly by the lord in the *Induction* to *The Taming of the Shrew* is played by Jon Rand and his courtiers upon the two Silesian ragamuffins, Schluck and Jau. The deeper meaning obviously inherent in the light-hearted fable, but scarcely touched upon by Shakespeare, is carefully and elaborately worked out by Hauptmann. "Jau and thyself," the courtier Karl says to his lord,

"Jau and thyself —
He there, thou here, my Jon, ye wander both
As utter strangers through this wealthy realm
Which will endure when both of ye at length
Are mouldering dust fast hidden in the grave,
And which is his as truly as 'tis thine."

There is the key-note of the play which is struck with increasing depth and solemnity in the lines

"For what we really are
Is little more than what he really is:
Our highest happiness is soap-bubbles.
We blow them with the breath of our very hearts,

Love them, aspire to them far in the blue
Until they burst. Behold, he does the same."

Such is the dream-like and transitory fabric of human life. Yet to it we must cling. For,

"That man or beast, interpreting his dreams,
Who loses the key unto his world of dreams
Stands naked in the frosty depths of space
At his familiar door in utter pain."

Now this symbolic content of the play is not only deeply felt by Jon Rand and his courtiers but is finally brought home to the egregious Jau himself. And hence the play has a unity of mood and appeal that has not always been properly stressed. No doubt, on the other hand, has ever been felt as to the masterly character work displayed in Schluck and Jau. These two — the village clown and the village drunkard — superbly themselves as they are, represent, at the same time, two eternal human types. Poet and ruler, dreamer and tyrant — call them what you will — one of them dwells in each human heart; they are about us in many guises, each pursuing what seems to him the reality of his dream.

And Pippa Dances has enjoyed, not quite justly, I think, a higher reputation than *Schluck and Jau.* It is a work of great depth and beauty but also of not a little obscurity. The obscurity does not attend the main symbolical business of the play, but rather certain details which can be harmoniously interpreted only with difficulty. The outline of the symbolical action is clear enough. Pippa is the spirit of beauty, conceived

by many men in many ways and pursued by each according to his character and his resultant ideals. The manager is the sensual man of the world who seeks beauty for the satisfaction of his desires; old Huhn represents the elemental, earth-born instinct of man shorn of all secondary qualities. Neither of these can snare the fluttering flame of beauty. Pippa, on the contrary, feels drawn at once to Michel Hellriegel, the idealist, the eternal poet and seeker. But Hellriegel, though worthy of her in a deep enough sense, not only cannot gain her as his own but actually causes her death. Dreaming he has forgotten the hard roads of earth, faring to his palace by the sea he is blind to the storms that hem him in, fixing his vision entirely upon the inner light he lets Pippa dance the dance of enslavement to the powers of earth and loses her at last. He does not even realise his loss, however, but wanders forth — a blind beggar — thinking that beauty his and the way clear. There remains Wann, "a mythical personage,"— mythical, I take it, because actual experience scarcely affords a character so cleansed of earthiness, whose life is vision and whose contemplation rises to the hardihood of action. His pregnant saying: "Tedium is where God is not," expresses the atmosphere of his life. He shows the manager the necessary failure of the latter's quest; he conquers the forces of earth in old Huhn; he sees the insufficiency of Hellriegel's golden innocence. Yet he cannot keep Pippa either. Some memories of the world and the flesh cling even to his soul; for one moment she was to him not merely the intellectual beauty. He can save her from others but not for himself. Thus to

all humanity the quest of ideal beauty is fruitless, but to Wann and Hellriegel the quest is its own reward.

Charlemagne's Hostage (1908), despite its employment of historical characters, is scarcely less symbolic than the preceding plays. In *Henry of Auë* Hauptmann had treated the question of natural evil; he now addresses himself to the problem of moral evil. Had it not been for the strange evil in Gersuind's soul, the emperor Karl had not been so tragically baffled by his belated love for her. But casting his eye upon the lovely hostage he encountered powers that are subject to no imperial sway. Hence the cry of his passion rises into a cry of protest against the fair seeming of the powers of sin:

"What hinders me from pressing my dark hand
On that white throat until thy power is dead
And nothing but the sweet, chaste, faultless form,
Wronged nevermore by thy accursèd soul,
Lies lovely in my arms?"

Do not these words, summing up the theme of the play, crystallise a human experience of true universality and constant recurrence? Against that exquisite guise of evil, so hauntingly embodied in Gersuind, there is for man the palliative if not the cure of action. Thus, speaking of himself, the emperor Karl exclaims:

"And that old ruler — yearns for the open field,
The level field under the boundless sky,
Above him the cloud's thunder and about
Thunder of armaments that fill the world!"

The plays in this volume have been under pretty steady critical fire in Germany. A soberer and more disinterested criticism may fruitfully point out that perfection has been in no age a mark of the Germanic genius. Ben Jonson's famous "Would he had blotted a thousand!" applies with equal justice to nearly every great creative artist of either English or German race. It is a fair question to ask, on the other hand, what other modern writer has shown Hauptmann's power and fecundity in reality, in poetry, in vision — a power and fecundity once more notably illustrated and heightened by the plays in this volume.

Schluck and Jau and *Charlemagne's Hostage* are here translated for the first time. I had neither forerunners to guide me nor the instruction of many analogous examples. The average translator of modern dramatic verse sticks to his author's sense and lets the poetry go. I have made every effort to avoid such fundamental failure. The version of *And Pippa Dances,* though executed under my supervision, owes its merits wholly to the skill of my colleague, Professor Sarah Tracy Barrows.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

SCHLUCK AND JAU

AN IRONICAL MASQUE WITH FIVE INTERRUPTIONS

Sly. What, household stuff?

Page. It is a kind of history.

Sly. Well, we'll see't. Come madam wife, sit by my side and let the world slip: we shall ne'er be younger.

The Taming of the Shrew. Induction.

CHARACTERS

Jon Rand
Karl
Malmstein
Sidselill
Dame Adeluz
Jau
Schluck
Hadit
The High Steward
The Fool
The Fur Trader
Ladies of the court, maids, huntsmen, musicians, serving-men and attendants of all kinds.

PROLOGUE

The speaker of the Prologue, a huntsman with a bugle at his girdle, issues forth from a parted curtain of green cloth. He is supposed to present himself to the hunting-party in the banqueting-hall of the hunting-castle to whom the following piece is given.

I bow me to the master of the hunt
And to this castle's worthy guests who are
Devoted like ourselves with body and soul
Unto Saint Hubert, patron saint of all.
The echoes of the hunt are dead. The high
Delight of autumn passes to its end.
Thin, glass-like sheets cover the moveless weirs.
The resonant barking of the brachs is dumb.
The red pack and the yellow pack together
With the white pack are resting in the kennels.
The dogs lie prone and dream, or else they lick
The fresh-sewn wounds which the young boar at bay
Gave them in struggling with his bloody tusks.
We have slain deer and badger, fox and lynx,
Partridge and pheasant, and the field-fare hang
Corded in long rows in the cellar safe:
And master Hare who never yet before
Travelled but upon level earth alone
Hangs from the watchman's windows in the tower —

And no man knows how that he rose so high.
The hunt is over, the merry feast at end,
The last hallooing silent on the breeze,
And in the early dawning will this house
Stand void of guests. Deserted will it lie
And raise its solitary turrets red
Above the endless multitude of trees;
These rooms will silent be but for the roar
Of the great forest, or the owl's nightly hoot,
The buzzard's scream or rustle of many wings
Made by the ancient warder's whirring doves.
Thus, worthy huntsmen, lend a gracious ear
And eye to what this curtain will disclose.
Over it let your courteous vision glide,
Unless it rather seek the beaker's ground,
And take our sturdy piece to be no more
Than the free child of an untroubled mood.

A GREEN LAWN IN FRONT OF THE HIGH IRON GATE OF A HUNTING-LODGE IN THE FOREST

Green, level ground fronting the high, iron gateway of a hunting-castle in the forest. Beyond the gate the ancient courtyard is visible. JAU *crouches in the foreground, shouting and gesticulating violently. He is thoroughly drunk.* SCHLUCK *is anxiously busied about* JAU. *He is less drunk.* SCHLUCK *has set down his begging-bag.* JAU *carries, slung on a strap, an old cigar box holding little cases of peppermint lozenges.*

From the distance floats hither the sound of a huntsman's horn.

JAU

Eh lil' man, lil' man, lil' man! Hol' on there! Wá'sh out, lil' man! We can't never agree that way! Naw! One peppermint lozenge, two peppermint lozenges, three peppermint lozenges! That's one, two, three of 'em! That's right, eh? Three times one is three! Three times three is nine! That's settled then! D'you b'lieve it now, lil' man?

SCHLUCK

Well, well, well, all right! You're all right. But look at this here! Never mind, never mind,

never mind! But here's one o' them lozenges, an' there's another, an' that makes eight an' two is ten an' ten that's an even number! Naw, you needn't be disputin'! You've won. I'll go an' fetch it! A quart!

JAU

One peppermint lozenge! Two peppermint lozenges! An' three is nine an' six is four, an' if you don't go this minute an' be quick about it I'll be helpin' you along! See, lil' man?

SCHLUCK

For God's sake, keep still, I'm goin'!

JAU

An' be quick about gettin' that there quart! One peppermint lozenge! Two peppermint lozenges! An' if ever you go standin' around my wife an' standin' aroun' her when I ain't there an' come over when I ain't at home, an' lie down with my wife when I ain't at home, I'll kick you down all the stairs.

SCHLUCK

For God's sake, what are you shoutin' for?

JAU

I'll shout if I want to! I c'n shout like two oxen. Anybody c'n hear it what wants to! Go an' fetch the quart! Go on! What? Eh? Can't you move? O Lord, lil' man! You'd better hurry, I'm tellin' you!

SCHLUCK

The trouble is that they ain't goin' to give me none!

JAU

Whiskey is what I want! Brandy is what I want! An' if I gotta sell my skin to get it! An' if I gotta sell my bit o' house! An' if I gotta sell my ol' woman! An' if I gotta sell my seven brats! An' my bed an' my chamber pot. . . .

SCHLUCK

Now Jau, ol' man! Come now an' listen! Ain't I your friend, eh? I'll go an' fetch it for you, I'll go, if you'll just be still. People'll think we're crazy.

JAU

[*Stammers thickly.*] One peppermint loz-z-z'-nge! Two peppermin-loz-z-z'nges!

SCHLUCK

People are comin'! Don' go to sleep.

[*A hunting train passes by. In front a huntsman who carries a slain fox; next comes the pack; thereupon huntsmen who blow their bugles. Then follows* JON RAND *accompanied by* KARL. *The train is closed by* MALMSTEIN *with the rest of the company.*

JON RAND

The scent was cold. I tell thee once again
The scent was cold.

KARL

Oh, and the magpie then?
Did thy brave dog accept the magpie's scent?

JON RAND

Who aims at magpies?

KARL

I!

JON RAND

Ay, surely, thou!
Thou art not so delicate of choice, the nose
Of Waldine is more delicate than is
A gourmet's tongue and is revolted at
Unclean wild things — among them magpies, too.
[*He observes* SCHLUCK *busied with* JAU, *interrupts himself and asks.*
Thy name, fellow?

SCHLUCK

Schluck!

JON RAND

And thy business here?

SCHLUCK

Oh, me lud, you see, sir, an' if you'll be good enough not to mind, sir, I'm just tryin' to help a friend that's had a accident.

KARL

Accidents of his causing, now and then.

SCHLUCK

You see, sir, if you want me to be quite honest, sir, we're poor people, very poor people indeed, sir.

JON RAND

What's the disease that plagues thy friend so sore?

SCHLUCK

He's got what you might call the fallin' sickness, sir, if you want me to be quite honest, sir — yes, that's it. We're very poor people, sir, an' so we're likely to have sickness.

JON RAND

The falling sickness? What is that, in truth?

SCHLUCK

I don't rightly know myself, sir, if you want me to be quite honest.

JON RAND

Well, then — in simple speech: the man is drunk.

SCHLUCK

That, too, me lud! Most certainly and assuredly, sir, that he is. But I asks you to consider that he drinks on account o' his troubles an' sorrows, sir. Poor people like us, sir, drink on that account an' not out o' wantonness.

JON RAND

What is it he holds in his right hand?

SCHLUCK

A match.

JON RAND

I don't mean that.

SCHLUCK

Just a match, sir, so help me! But you see, sir, if you want me to be quite honest, sir, I'm jus' a wee bit dizzy in my head. You see I have an ol'

woman what takes in washin'. That's the way we plain people talks. You'll excuse me for talkin' that way, sir. It's the best I know.

JON RAND

Wherefore hast thou a bracelet at thy wrist?

SCHLUCK

It's my way o' life that makes me wear it. It's to prevent the rheumatiz, you see, sir. An' my wife, she has a sister, an' she has a husband, an' he's got a brother, an' this is him, you see, sir.

JON RAND

A most queer creature! Almost I desire
To see him closer in a clearer light.

MALMSTEIN

Knowst thou the other, lord? His name is Jau,
A most mad fellow with brains turned awry.

JON RAND

Thieves! Sluggards! Ragamuffins! — all of ye!
What do ye in my castle's territory?
'Tis far enough, methought, from beaten roads,
And nowise like an inn where brandy flows.
Is not the highway broad enough for ye?
Most drunken strollers, must ye drag your rank
And sodden bodies to my tulip-beds
And lay them down amid the lovely bloom
Of Lady Sidselill's gardens? Who am I, fellow?

SCHLUCK

Well, now, you see, sir, I wouldn't for the world, sir, make so bold as to say. You see, sir, I see right well, if you want me to be quite honest, that

you're some grand gentleman, sir. But I ain't no thief, so help me! I go about among lords an' counts, sir, buyin' old cloth an' things. If you got a cast-off weddin' ring, I'll buy it. If you have old coins or chains or pig's teeth or corals, or an old executioner's sword, or old china, or a saint's relic you don't want, or a pair of old leather boots — I'll buy any of 'em. An' I'm a very artistic kind o' fellow — very artistic, indeed, sir. I was born to be artistic — that I was! I go from place to place an' where I come people wonder at my bein' so very artistic-like!

JON RAND

Vile zany! May Beëlzebub reward thee
For this wild torrent of the emptiest words.
But get thee from my vision, drunken wight!
As for yon fellow, put him in the stocks!
And thou, sir Steward, see to it well henceforth
That when I come from hunting with my guests,
No drunken sprawlers lie upon the path,
Or else, by God above, I'll have the hounds
Freed from their leash, and the result will be
Not on my head but thine!

KARL

Jon Rand, Jon Rand!
Stick them upon the spit and have them turned.
I know a better plan, Jon Rand, by far,
I swear it by my excellent mare, than that
Thou be so very wroth!

JON RAND

Wag not so free thy tongue!
[*To* SCHLUCK.
What dost thou there, fellow most coarse and lewd?

SCHLUCK

[*Still busied about* JAU.] You see, sir, I'm responsible — that's it. If only I had the strength, which I ain't got, sir. If I could go an' carry this friend o' mine on my back, then I'd be doin' my duty, sir. I'm a honest fellow, sir, an' Jau here is a honest fellow, too. Honest men, sir, will sometimes take a drop too much. An' I'm responsible, if you want me to be quite honest, sir.

JAU

[*Drawls in his sleep.*

An' when the house was builded well
He laid him down an' slept;
Then came the landgrave's fair young wife
An' to his side she crept.

JON RAND

To gaol with him! In the stocks! Once more I say't!
There let him lie and toy with landgraves' wives
In sodden, drunken dreams. Away with him!
Why tire thyself about yon brandy-skin?
Let the weak flicker of thy senses guide
Thee on the homeward path and lay thee down
Abed beside thy soap-suds reeking wife,
And pray a litle prayer or two in thanks
For the deservèd whipping thou hast 'scaped!

SCHLUCK

You see, me lud, I'm jus' fair sweatin' with fear! If I could jus' have the happiness o' servin' you in any way, sir, I'd 'umbly request sir, that you send me to gaol an' take my friend here an' let him go home. My good friend here, I must

tell you, sir, it's a very queer thing about him, sir. I'm mighty fond o' him, sir. An' his thoughts sir, they goes mighty high — very high indeed is his notions, me lud! A man c'n have on torn clothes an' have grand notions all the same.

JON RAND

How? Doth he hold yon keg of rum so dear?

MALMSTEIN

Ay, by thy leave, my lord, of these twin clowns
Jau is the king and Schluck the chancellor.

KARL

Not only chancellor is honest Schluck,
Nay, but at need is man at arms, esquire,
Steward and cup-bearer, cook and cellar-master,
With equal indefatigable zeal.

MALMSTEIN

Nor is it, at all times, an easy life!
For a king's moods, my lord, compared unto
This clown's most variable temper, are
Most light to bear. I have come upon him oft
At the wood's edge, or deep in forests else,
And saw this Jau, his sceptre swung aloft,
Train me his chancellor, cellar-master, cook
And master of horse — for oft in stables sleeps he —
As though he were a poodle, scarce a man.

SCHLUCK

No, sir, if I may make so bold as to say, sir, you're not just altogether right there, sir.

JON RAND

The one to gaol, the other to the tower.
To-morrow will I sit in judgment on them.
Hast thou aught else to urge 'gainst this command?

SCHLUCK

No. I'll jus' leave the rest to God, if you don't mind, sir. I jus' happened to suck my hollow tooth, if you want me to be quite honest, me lud.

[SCHLUCK *is led away.*

JON RAND

What was the counsel for me that thou hadst?

KARL

Take thirty loads of straw, a keg of pitch,
And heap them in the inn which still thou dost
Suffer to stand and trade upon thy ground.
And thereupon take tinder, flint and steel,
Set fire to it — it burns! And when in ashes
The den lies prone. . . . Well, do not throstles fly
For berries, and dogs after carrion go?
And shall not drunkards scent an inn albeit
Miles from their path? This is my prologue merely.
Surfeit of sweets is bitter in the belly.
The lovely Sidselill's time grows heavy and long
With honied moon still following honied moon.
Were I her guardian, as thou art, Jon Rand,
I'd give a play for her, upon mine honour,
Whereat the child should still in memory
Laugh through the distant years.

JON RAND

'Tis well, but bring
The players hither!

KARL

Is there a better, speak,
Than yonder belching villain of the road?
Did ever better snorer, Jon, than he,
Make any stage to tremble? Give me leave,
And by to-morrow shall this castle see
A drama with twain heroes — one in the stocks —
So laughable that thou like to a carp,
Seething in humour, shalt but gasp for air,
And Sidselill bite with delight her tongue.

JON RAND

Temper thy promises. The half will serve.

KARL

Art thou a sucking babe and I thy nurse?
Must I prepare thy food for thee in bites?
Nay, Jon. I speak the truth, no more, no less.
Flat are the jests of all our merry crowd —
A surfeited stomach makes a dullard's head!
Thus sweets and pastries rob the mind of edge. . . .

JON RAND

By Heaven, he is enamoured suddenly
Of yonder bloated rascal from whose sight
We shrink revolted! Thou hast a stomach, Karl?

KARL

And wilt thou die of being bored, my friend,
Of utter boredom, as thou art doing now?
The pastry-feeders dig thy grave for thee.
Pastry ye feed on when the morning comes,
Patties and pastry in the evening, too —
Day in, day out, the selfsame fats and sweets.

Your flesh is flesh no more, but turns to sweets;
So do your very brain and very heart —
Stale, cold, unprofitable sweetish stuff!

JON RAND

Yet is it not a dreadful sight, my friends,
To see a man degraded in the morn
Below the beasts? For *their* bells in the fields
Make music; deep they breathe the bracing air,
And honourably crop the dewy grass,
And with sane strength adorn the dawn of day.
Whereas these clowns, gifted with finer sense,
Affront the lovely glories of the hour,
The landscape's face of Autumn beautiful,
And with the howling of their blasphemies
And horrid roaring desecrate the free
And solemn air of heaven.

KARL

Jon Rand, Jon Rand!
Many a thing have I this morn beheld:
Things that God suffered, but that liked me not!
These clowns were blinded by their vile excess,
So that of all the miracles of morn
They knew, they breathed not one. What was it, Jon,
That blinded thee when thou didst place against
Thy shoulder the dread arquebus and slewest
The deer that closed with loud lament his eyes,
Ere yet the golden day burst from the deep?

JON RAND

Make me to laugh and not to weep, my Karl!

KARL

That will I do, to-morrow, on my word,

With these most miserable fellows, Jon.
In garden of our high delight the clod
Shall put forth branches green. And what has now
Caused thee disgust and waked thee from the deep
Fervour of huntsman's joy, to speak in praise
Of the pure glory of the golden dawn —
That shall refresh thy merry mood to-morrow.
Whom will it harm if once our feast become
A peasant festival and masquerade?

[*Through the iron gate maidens are seen playing at ball. A green ball flies high into the air.*

But, Jon, high o'er the gateway flew a ball!
Ah, hadst thou seen it as I saw — it flew
From the shadow in the sun! Hadst thou but seen
That small, green sphere, my Jon, it had awakened
Straightway the slumbering god within thy breast.

JON RAND

Blow in your horns! For it is Sidselill
At play within the courtyard with the maidens.

[*The huntsmen blow a blast. At once lovely young women and maidens become visible behind the gates, among them* DAME ADELUZ, *the lady in waiting. They step aside and let* SIDSELILL *approach the gate. This is now thrust open and, led by* SIDSELILL, *there approaches a gay procession of women, pages, old and venerable retainers of the castle, among them the* HIGH STEWARD *and the* FUR-TRADER. *The music does*

not fall silent until JON RAND *has twice kissed* SIDSELILL'S *hand.*

JON RAND

A greeting, sweet, small mistress of my heart!
Exquisite little lady skilled in spells
Wherewith dead, burned out ashes may be kindled
Into new glow and fields of rubble made
To burst in magic of eternal bloom;
Spells that may lend a tongue to the dumb fish,
A lyric voice to stones, and that may lure
Fresh green from withered bushes and inspire
The ass that turns the mill-stones with such love
Of music that o'er the rattle of the mill
He raise a voice like psalteries and flutes
Unheard before.

KARL

And dost thou play the flute?

JON RAND

Ay, in a measure, but not like to thee.
Come, sing to us thy latest madrigal.

SIDSELILL

Belovèd, here's a trader from far away
Vladivostock with a great store of furs.
Wilt thou not buy me a cloak of arctic fox?

JON RAND

A hundred! And I'll have the fellow hanged
If in three days he bring but ninety and nine.

THE FUR-TRADER

Your lordship may have me hanged, if I don't procure furs for a hundred cloaks for the lofty

and lovely maiden! [*With a furtive glance at* JAU.] God help us all, what sinful drunkenness! If your lordship will only be so kind and take the trouble: I have a waggon and in the waggon your lordship will find my daughter Rebecca and furs of sable, of pole-cat, of the black panther, of the otter, of marten and whatever the heart desires. [*With a second glance at* JAU.] What frightful drunkenness!

JON RAND

Bring what thou hast into the hall above!
We had a goodly chase, sweet Sidselill.

KARL

[*Takes the slain fox from the hand of a hunter and holds it up high before* SIDSELILL.

The rogue is dead, the rogue is dead!
Now let us bury him straight,
For if the dogs devour him not
The ravens will not wait!

HUNTSMEN

Oho! Halloo!

SIDSELILL

Belovèd, do but see how the small furs
Glitter with iridescence in the sun
Through all their long and soft and delicate hairs.

JON RAND

And does it please thee?

SIDSELILL

Ay, surely, very well.

JON RAND

And how, my sweetest, didst thou pass the time?
For when thine eyes did ope I was away,
And the space next thee empty. Tell me then!
Wert thou a little sad over that void?
What didst thou through the long hours following
Till now?

THE HIGH STEWARD

My lord, I found her in the garden
There sate she and let the white and gleaming sand
Run silent through her fingers listlessly.

JON RAND

How often laughed she?

DAME ADELUZ

She did smile, my lord.
Twice only did she smile nor laugh at all.
When wrapped in snowy linen she did stand
Still rosy from her bath by the open casement,
And the fresh current fanning her did wave
Her garment light — then smiled she first, again
When Fritz, smoothing her palfrey in the court,
Bridling and saddling it, did trill his song.

JON RAND

I know him well; he is full of merry airs.

DAME ADELUZ

But this time 'twas a sombre ditty, lord,
With burden of a long and sad farewell,
Most heart-breaking to hear.

JON RAND

And then she laughed?

DAME ADELUZ

She smiled.

JON RAND

Thou very dearest, strangest child!
Sad is she when the rest of us are gay,
And laughs when that a heart is bleeding.

SIDSELILL

Dear,
My slender greyhound sprained his paw and now
He limps; it hurts him. . . .

JON RAND

Plaything of the winds
Is thine own soul, sweet Sidselill, even like
The Æolian harp hung in our garden's shrine:
When the wind spirits touch its golden strings
With their invisible fingers, then it speaks,
And moans faint answers to those questions faint,
But to our ruder asking it is dumb.
Another greyhound shall be thine, dear child.
But let us mount the castle for brief rest.
Then to the banquet-table, O my friends!
Let logs gigantic in the chimneys roar,
But through the open doors let the keen air
Autumnal enter in. And we will sing
And feast together far into the night,
And drain our goblets to my treasure's health!

[*The procession moves into the castle, bugles resound and the huntsmen sing.*

SONG OF THE HUNTSMEN

Hang the rogue, hang the rogue
All on a willow tree!

The skin is mine, the tallow thine,
And merry will we be!
Hang him! Hang him!
The rogue! The rogue!

A HIGH MAGNIFICENT CHAMBER

A high, magnificent room. A door to the left; another in the background. To the right a gorgeous canopied bed. In this bed JAU *is lying. Two serving-men stand in waiting. They hold on silver trays tea, chocolate, coffee, wine and delicate pastry.* HADIT, *a charmingly garbed page, opens the door to the left at which a knocking has just been heard.* KARL *conducts* JON RAND *in.*

KARL

Enter! Tarry a little in this hall
Ere that thou mount the steed that paws below.
There's time enough still left thee for the chase
Till noon.

JON RAND

What is it? What is to be seen?
What hast thou? Mould I smell and mouldy air.
Thrust wide the windows! Does a man snore here?

KARL

Has he not wakened, Hadit?

HADIT

Nay, not yet.

JON RAND

Who is it snores and hath not wakened yet?
In the deserted chambers of this wing
There has been long no other sound at all
Except by chance the squeaking of a mouse,
Or at the most a he-cat's shrill lament.
For of the ghosts that trundle here at night,
As watchman and as stable-boy report,
I cannot speak for I have never heard
Aught with my proper ears.

KARL

Ah, who snores here?
A creature with long ears — an ass — naught else!
But truly upon many a royal couch
Lies such another often, when the man
Has crept into it who is there at home.
Thus I proclaim with almost equal truth:
Here lies a king! Oh, doubt it not, my Jon,
That here a king's asleep. For what an ass
May lack to make him kinglike, here wilt thou
Find it spread forth, and thou shalt see, in truth,
How I will prove myself a kingmaker.

JON RAND

Karl, Karl, how can a clever head like thine
Waste precious hours with a clown's flat tricks?
My chancellor thou couldst be. . . .

KARL

Ah, my good Jon,
May Satan's self drive painfully thy herds
Afield. But let me keep my peace, good Jon.
The harness of duty does not tempt my neck,
Even though it be sown with diamonds.

Two girls' arms lightly laid about it — these —
Lightly, I said, not fast, are better far.
[JAU *yawns.*
Behold, he drops into a great lord's part
And sleeps far on into the light of day.
A clown's flat tricks? A fool? A clever wight?
Dear Jon, life metes the very measure out
To both in this world — neither more nor less.
[*The door in the background is noisily thrust open. The laughing and choking girls put their heads in and disappear again at once. The two serving-men also burst out with laughter.*
Oho! What's that? Away, ye silly maids!
You'll spoil our pleasure by your idle ways.
This game is very serious. Who will not
Curb, while it lasts, his loud-mouthed foolishness,
Will be confined and chained with coral-beads
Like an unruly, froward beagle-hound.
[*To the two serving-men.*
Call him Serenity or serene lord!
Serve him as though he were our lord himself —
As though the castle, forest, marsh and field
And princedom were all subject to his sway.

JON RAND

[*Shaking his head.*
Forsooth, this Jau, this goitered rascal lies
Clad like a prince hereditary abed.

KARL

The Indian juggler in a few brief hours
Causes a tree to grow from mango seed
By magic. And it seems to me to-day
As though myself were such a wizard wise.

I burn to know, Jon, whether this strange plant
Will grow apace or will be smothered quite.
I think that it will grow with rapid strides
And put forth blossoms wondrous strange that are
Though transitory, gay to look upon.

JAU

[*Behind the hangings.*

Oh — ah! Oh — ah!

JON RAND

Well, excellent magician, show thy art!
Now yawns an ass; but let it be thy care
That a king's self arises from the bed.

JAU

Oh — ah-ah-ah!

KARL

Be still! Make not a sound. [*To* JON RAND.]
Go or stay here,
As it may please thee. When the game doth rise
And grow most merry, I will have thee called.

JON RAND

'Tis well, I will remain! Be still! I stay.

KARL

How must ye call me?

HADIT

Lord High Steward.

JON RAND

And me?

HADIT

Physician to His Highness.

KARL

Hush! He stirs!

JAU

Oh-ah-ah-ah! Oh me, oh me, oh me! Ho, lud! Mother! Oh-ah! One peppermint drop an' two peppermint drops an' three is four. Mother!

[*With a sudden impulse he swings his legs out of bed and sits on the bed's edge staring about him with wide open eyes. On his head is a crown of gilt pasteboard, held fast by a rubber band under his chin. He lowers his head and shakes himself, still yawning. He mutters gibberish, cries* "Mother!" *Then he laughs a short laugh and says.*

Well, now, listen to this here, your worship! You c'n believe me all right, your honour! That there woman . . . she knows what's what — she does! Every year she gits a brat! Never the same father.— But you gotta have your tools, your worship an' that's a fac'! You gotta have brushes an' paint. An' you don't git cinnabar red for nothin', neither! [*Imitating the judge's voice, affectedly.*] Don't drink so much, my man, don't drink so much. — Your honourable worship is right! Your worship is right. A low-lived slut like that . . . a swine like that . . . it ought to be forbid. [*He looks dully about him.*] I'm dreamin', ain't I?

HADIT

[*With a deep bow.*

Does your Serenity command a bath?

Shall the grooms saddle your Arabian steed?
And her Serenity, your spouse, did bid me
Give you this fragrant nosegay of her flowers
What time you deigned to waken.

FIRST SERVANT

Does your Highness
Command tea, coffee, or a cordial else,
Or Tokay wine or fruits or chocolate?

JAU

[*Passes the palm of his hand over his face and yawns again.*] Oh-ah-ah-ah! I do believe I'm dreamin', s'help me! Eh, mother! The swine! Dam' nastiness! Mess! Ugh! Eh, mother! Pinch my big toe, will you? I want to wake up! That's it exackly! You c'n go an' look in the cupboard. There's a herring from last night. I didn't eat it an' it's got a peppermint drop in its mouth. What's it got inside o' its mouth? A peppermint drop, I say. You're dreamin', mebbe, ol' lady! Wha'? Aw, come along an' fetch me that there herring!

[*He pulls his eyes wide open and stares about him again.*

HADIT

Do you command a bath? Will you not deign
By kind command to indicate which doublet
I may present your Highness? The hunting coat
With sable trimmed, or else the velvet mantle?
Or shall I call the chamberlain, my lord?

JAU

[*Roaring.*] A herring is what I want! A her-

ring, damn it! A herring an' potatoes an' beer — that's what!

[*He takes a fur-tipped boot, the nearest thing within reach, and hurls it against the wall.*

KARL

[*Approaching reverentially.*

Is your Serenity vexed? Will your Serenity
Deign to declare what has disturbed your mood?
I am inconsolable, in deepest truth!
One word or gesture will suffice, and woe
To him who has been guilty of our grief.

JAU

[*Glares at* KARL, *suddenly pokes out his tongue at him and roars.*] Bah!

KARL

[*Zealously.*

Doubtless it is most true, it is most just
What now your Highness deigned to indicate,
And punishment shall follow on the deed.
And yet I hope for some compassion.
Let not your ever faithful steward pay
For what some wight, 'gainst all command, committed.

JAU

[*Stares at him again and slowly presses both hands against his temples.*] Mother! Come on over here, will you? Look here! Is there a man standin' there or not? That's what I axes you, mother! Is there or ain't there? An' another one over yonder! Keep still, mother, an' go an' run an' fetch a doctor, for Gawd's sake! I eat some-

thin' wrong, that's what! I'm sick as a dawg! I *musta* eat somethin'! Go an' git a doctor so he c'n bleed me! Git the barber an' let him bleed me! I'm dreamin', that's what! Tell the barber that I can't wake up! Say I got a rumblin' in my belly an' I gotta ha' somethin' to open my bowels! Ain't we got a little castor oil? Le's have it, mother! Hurry! Eh, if I could wake up! Mother, look, there's another man . . .!

KARL

If your Serenity will but recall!
I am your trusted steward from of old.
There is the youth Hadit, your Highness's
Page of the hunt who took the bloody knife
Wherewith your Highness did the boar to death
But yesterday and as his duty bids,
Cleansing it with his gleaming gloves from blood,
Replaced it duly in your hunting belt.
Thus has it been on every morning since
We took our habitation in this lodge.
But the physician comes.

JON RAND

[*Approaching.*
Your Highness sees
That eating many truffles is not well,
Even as I warned your Highness yestereve.
Where are the pains? Are they in front? Behind?
In head, or chest or in the abdomen?

JAU

Aw, what's that? There ain't nothin' hurtin' me, nothin'! Who are you, anyhow, an' what d'you want?

JON RAND

Your Highness's physician, by your leave.

JAU

[*Starts, glares, passes his hand over his face, speaks first to himself and then gradually louder and with gathering fear.*] It's all over with me, that's what! I gotta go! I'm seein' things, mother. A witch has bewitched me! The evil eye is on me, that's what! I'm seein' devils with long tails! I believe I'm in hell! I believe I'm dead an' gone to hell! Run, mother, run, an' tell the barber to come an' bring leeches! Let him bring a dozen! An' run on to the doctor an' to the parson! Tell him to come an' have pity. I'll promise anythin' an' I'll do anythin', if he'll only just pray me outa this!

JON RAND

Your pardon! 'Tis the nightmare, your Serenity!
If you will graciously consent to drink
Swiftly a glass of strengthening Tokay wine,
'Twill cure this slight distemper on the spot.

JAU

[*Swiftly empties the glass, opens his eyes wide, enjoys the aftertaste, smacks his lips and says.*]
That was a bit o' good ol' rye whiskey.

KARL

Tokay, your Highness, good Hungarian wine!
Your Highness's thought is still of yestermorn
When, following the sturdy hunters' custom
We had a picnic under greenwood trees
With bread and brandy and with spicèd cheese.

Has your Serenity forgotten how
You shot most skillfully a brace of deer,
Also a fox escaping from the dogs?

JAU

Well now, you see . . . Naw, I don't want to be denyin' that — not a bit — naw. Only it's all so dam' queer . . .

JON RAND

Patience, Sir Steward! Have but patience still!
Visibly does the dread delusion yield.

JAU

Will you come here jus' a minit, you there? You got hands, ain't you? An' you gotta beard? An' you got on a mighty long coat, eh? An' you c'n talk and scrape; you c'n do anythin' a man c'n do? Well now, you see, I can't help feelin' that I'm dreamin'. Is there, mebbe, a lil' more o' that rye to be had?

HADIT

Ay, a huge keg of it lies in the cellar.

JAU

Well, now, you see. That's the way it is. Ain't that feller got legs, an' legs o' silk, too? Come here a bit. [*He pinches* HADIT.

HADIT

Ouch!

JAU

You see, now? He hollers when he's pinched.

You c'n feel the flesh o' him an' hurt him. An' all the while I think I'm dreamin'!

[*The* BARBER *enters.*

KARL

Your Highness deigned the barber to command.

JAU

Is there another lil' glassful o' that rye? [*They pour it for him.*] Tha's right. I axed for a barber; yes. That's right. That's exackly right! Things is, mebbe, gettin' a bit brighter in my innards. Was I drunk yesterday, eh?

JON RAND

'Tis true, your Highness deigned to drink your fill;
Nor was't a little, it must be confessed.
For in the knightly art of revelry
Your Highness is a master. None of us
Did half as often see the beaker's dregs
As your Serenity, our prince and lord.
And yet you stood upon your noble legs
Steadily, capable of speech and act,
Whereas we others grovelled like to. . . .

JAU

I musta dreamed one thing or t'other, one thing or t'other! You're a doctor, eh? An' that feller's a barber. Now listen to what I'm goin' to say — word for word! I was drunk, you're right there! Both of us was drunk, Schluck an' me. Schluck, that's my friend, ain't he?

[*He looks alternately at* JON RAND *and* KARL.

KARL

[*To* JON RAND

Knowest thou a noble of the name of Schluck?

JON RAND

Upon mine honour, no, Sir High Steward.

KARL

Give me your gracious leave to speak two words,
And all these sickly fancies will I drive
So far that they torment you nevermore.
The ancient prince — your father, noble lord —
Suffered at times from much congested wind.
Then his intestines crowded heart and stomach,
So that he nourished evil dreams, like you.
And so it came to pass that now a prince
He knew himself, now deemed himself to be
A lowly hind, writhed in the mud, forgot
His princeliness. Suddenly thus at times
Though garmented in purple and in gold
He grew most ox-like, nay, indeed, most ass-like —
In short, became a beast in every sense.
And by such dreams the great are often plagued.
Nebuchadnezzar, as your Highness knows,
Before the gates of his great palace lay
And, ox-like, chewed the grass. Thus that most blessed
And sublime prince, your Highness's late father.
I will not say that he did chew the grass;
Certain it is he deemed himself a beggar,
A sluggard and a clown of sodden ways,
And wrought upon by his delusion strange
He slept at night in stables, hayricks, barns.

JAU

An' did he sell peppermint drops, too?

JON RAND

Assuredly, he did that, too, your Highness.

JAU

Well, well, what d'you think? Then all this here must be all right. I can't tell, o' course. But look here: How c'n it be? Mebbe I ain't alive at all! Mebbe that dam', low crittur of a grave-digger's done for me long ago? But I'm even with him anyhow! What did that dawg used to roar out after me? "The devil's a-heatin' an extry hot oven for you!" Rats! If this is hell — if this here is hell, I say, the grave-digger an' the parson an' the whole dam' congregation c'n go to heaven for me! Ain't that right, you fine lil' manikin, eh?

HADIT

I do not grasp your Highness's subtle speech.
Far be it from my dull and sluggish mind
To follow the high soaring of your spirit.

KARL

Thank Heaven, your Highness is indeed not dead!
Heaven's goodness, acting through the leech's skill,
Guarded your land, your humble folk and us,
Your utterly devoted servants, from
That dire calamity even to this day.

JAU

Aha! Aha! Mebbe so, mebbe so! It's possible, mebbe. O' course, I ain't got no wings neither, so this here can't be heaven. Mebbe I've been dreamin'. Well, well, well! What a bed

this is! Come now — you! Honest, now? What am I supposed to be? What is it I am?

HADIT

Your Highness is our gracious prince and lord.

JAU

Go slow, slow, slow. . . . One thing after another! I can't take all that in so quick like. Then, mebbe, I got horses here?

HADIT

Great herds; a stable in which champ and paw
A thousand steeds. All that the heart desires.

JAU

They champ? You don't feed 'em champagne, do you? An' now f'r instance: Have I got wine in my cellar?

HADIT

Surely. Most precious wine from Hungary,
From Rhine and Mosel rivers, and there rest
Untouched, a thousand ancient kegs within
Your Highness's extensive cellar-floors.

JAU

An', an' f'r instance: I got chickens an' geese? An' I c'n have 'em killed an' roasted, an' eat an' eat?

HADIT

Most surely, lord, as much as you desire!

JAU

[*Feels his head and becomes aware of the paste-*

board crown.] Wha'? Did my horns grow here? What's that I got sittin' on my head?

KARL

The crown, your Highness, as is fit and right.

JAU

[*Half rising.*] Well, I'll be . . . I'll be . . . I'm a prince, eh?

JON RAND

I hardly understand your Highness's question.

JAU

[*Still fingering his crown. In overwhelming astonishment.*] I'll be . . . I'll be God . . . I'm a prince? Eh?

KARL

And does your lordship doubt it that you live?
And does your Highness doubt that this great castle
With all its spacious lands and forests wide
Is yours indeed? Or do you doubt, perchance,
That this day is Saint Hubert's day and that
The merry blare of trumpets in the court
Calls to the boar-hunt, at your high command?
Doubt, if you choose, that in the hall your spouse
Awaits to imprint her morning salutation
Upon your brow, and fill your heart with bliss,
And wish you joy, but not unto the chase,
Which were an evil omen! But do not doubt
That you are a high lord and wealthy prince,
The very noblest next the king himself.

JAU

All right then! Hand me them breeches! I know what's what now. I'm standin' on my two legs. [*In a tone of command.*] Stockin's! [HADIT *hands him the stockings. He rises, takes a step to the left and spits thrice. He takes a few steps more and again spits thrice.*] So all that measly mess is come to an end. That's for the dam' court! An' that for the list o' drunkards! An' this here is for all them as wanted to down me, as used to say: you ain't nobody an' you can't do nothin', an' you ain't goin' to be nothin', you ragamuffin! My wife oughta know this, that's what I say — the high-falutin', stiff-necked trollop! Oh, my wife oughta know this! I bet a hundred plates o' sausage soop, she'd just faint, she'd just fairly slam down! O Jesus, Mary an' Joseph! Oh, dam' it all to hell everlastin'! She'd just fall over; she wouldn't never git up no more! Now you'll see what's been in me all along — the kind o' fellow I am! Oh crikey! Jumpin' is what you'll have to do! Beggin', like lil' dawgs! Oh, but you'll have to mind! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Thataway an' no different! [*To* KARL.] Here, you steward or meward or whatever you is — am I a prince?

KARL

My senses had I lost were I to doubt it.

JAU

All right. But why, I says, why does that there doctor look at me thataway with his bloody eyes? I don't want to see that fellow no more. He looks at me like a leech, like a bloodsucker! Git him

outa here this minit! I'm hungry. Lather me first and shave me. Then have half a dozen eggs put in the pan an' a bit o' bacon. The doctor c'n go to hell! What did he say about my father? My father, says he, was a good for nothin'? An' got drunk on whiskey? An' slept in a ditch? I'll have him hanged!

KARL

I beg your gracious Highness to recall
That the physician through whose magic art
You live, did speak of dreams and not of waking.

JAU

Bah, I says! My ears is burstin' with his twaddle! Who was it dreamed? Not me! Mebbe he dreamed or mebbe you dreamed! I been layin' on silk sheets 's far 's I c'n think back. I was born on 'em an' on no dung-heap. What's that? I ain't been dreamin'!

KARL

Will your Serenity mount to horse at once?

JAU

Well, why not, if the hoss is a good one! D'you think I never sat on a dam' hoss afore now? An' no old nag, no old flayer's carrion neither! First I'll look at the whole business, then I'll eat a piece o' meat with dumplin's and gravy and sour-krout, an' I want a pitcher o' beer, an' then we c'n go a-ridin'! [*He stands and listens.*

KARL

The dogs are giving tongue! It is the pack.

JAU

[*About whose shoulders a cloak is being laid.*] Chain 'em tight! Don't let 'em go. You want to chain them beasts — that's what! My leg is still black an' blue where a dam' cur got a hold o' me. [*He approaches the window. The blowing of the hunting horns is heard and the loud acclaim of the huntsmen.* JAU *answers.*] Hallo! Hallo! [*Silence. Then.*] Mother! Come here, will you? Look, down there, down there, down there . . .!

JON RAND

[*Laying his hand lightly on* JAU'S *shoulder.*] The nightmare, your Serenity!

JAU

To hoss — to hoss — to hoss!

[*He goes out swiftly guided by* HADIT.

SIDSELILL'S CHAMBER

SIDSELILL'S *chamber. An open door in the background gives on a high terrace. To the left is a great chimney in which a fire is burning; to the right steps lead to an elevation in the hollow made by a bay-window. Next to this is a low door. Next to the chimney is a similar door.* SIDSELILL *is sitting on the steps and thoughtfully turns over in her hands a piece of embroidery in pearls.* DAME ADELUZ *is busy at a table that is covered with furs, costly garments and jewels.*

DAME ADELUZ

Ah, what a wealth, dear child! God help us all!
Come hither and see! Brocade and heavy silk
And precious furs and, as thou didst desire,
An arctic fox's skin. Ah, child, dear child,
Leap thou for joy and come and take delight
For heart and eyes in sight of golden things
And flash of many jewels! Surely thou
Needst but to wish, to think a wish — at once
Is the desire fulfilled. Oh, didst thou ever
Dream of such happiness? Art thou aware
Of all the goodly treasures of thy life?
The country's comeliest gentleman and prince
Lies, a devoted lover, at thy feet;
His captivated heart beseeches thee

Still, still to yearn, demand and to desire
That he might give thee more.

SIDSELILL

O Adeluz!

DAME ADELUZ

Yes, child.

SIDSELILL

Didst thou behold the drummer lad
Striking his drum out on the terrace bright —
The swarthy Ali with his raven hair . . .
Is it not black as jet? I marked it well,
He had strewn violets on his drum-skin . . . that
He did for me. I marked it very well. . . .

DAME ADELUZ

She marked it! And to hide her gazing played
With the Angora kitten which Jon Rand —
Heaven save him from the pangs of jealousy —
Had given her but that day.

SIDSELILL

Ay, so it seemed.
I saw the violets dance. I know it well.
It was for me.

DAME ADELUZ

And so henceforth, dear child,
We will beware of letting in the young
Savoyard and his marmot. We will close
The little gate, and keep it closed and be
Safer, O little wanderer of the heart!

SIDSELILL

[*Rises, still holding the embroidery in her hand, and approaches the door to the terrace.*

How was that tale of Sultan Bajazeth?

DAME ADELUZ

It runs: He had ten thousand falconers.

SIDSELILL

Thinkest thou the embroidered hood will please him?

DAME ADELUZ

Whom? Rand? Jon Rand? The hood thou workest at?
Ah, had thy slender fingers never so fine,
Nor half so delicately it impearled —
If ever again Jon Rand the falcon bore
Upon his wrist, nor the bird on its head
The hood — then it would mean Jon Rand had died,
Or else his falcon turned into a goose!

SIDSELILL

How was the tale of Sultan Bajazeth?

DAME ADELUZ

What mean'st thou, child?

SIDSELILL

How once in time of war
He snared a count and into prison cast?

DAME ADELUZ

Nor let him free for all the heaps of gold;

But when men offered him twelve falcons white
As ransom . . .

SIDSELILL

That is the story I would hear.
For Jon must give white falcons to me!

DAME ADELUZ

What?

SIDSELILL

Yes, I desire white falcons, Adeluz:
Twelve stately birds in whiteness as of ermine,
And they shall be my knights and messengers,
And on their talons carry silver chains,
And on their heads bediamonded hoods.
Twelve snowy falcons. Go and tell it Jon.
Then daily will I ride a-hunting. He
Shall be my falconer.

DAME ADELUZ

Another whim!

[SIDSELILL *slowly passes out on the terrace.*

[KARL *enters.*

KARL

Good-morning, Adeluz!

DAME ADELUZ

Good-morning, lord.

KARL

Thou art a clever woman and a brave,
And no mere prudish bread and butter miss.

DAME ADELUZ

Much thanks, Sir Karl.

KARL

'Tis well, now hear my words.
We have a jest in hand and need thy help.
Accursèd be thy widowhood, if it
Cannot be merrier. Art thou going to mourn
And mourn and wilt? Why then thou mightst as well
Follow thy husband to the grave. Now hear!

DAME ADELUZ

Dost thou desire to lead me to the altar?

KARL

Not of my own free will! Give me no pangs!
But for that I am thy servant — standing, lying,
Or any way it please thee to be served.
Think not thy raven garb of woe affrights me.
I eat no bird unplucked and what the hue
Of the plucked feathers is indifferent!

DAME ADELUZ

O Karl, thou mak'st me shudder! What a man!
Art thou Sir Bluebeard come to earth again?
Be wary or I'll make a noose of crêpe
And throttle thee.

KARL

I'd die! But hark my words:
We are waxing mouldy at this court; the mildew
Covers us head to foot. The spider boredom
Turns our soul's house to a rope-maker's shop
Or snare of midges, and the spider fattens
Upon the murky air. I blow the web,
I curse and blow upon it — but in vain!
The chase is no more chase, the feast no feast,

And if I wag my tongue in merry jest,
His eyes rebuke me!

DAME ADELUZ

Not Jon Rand's?

KARL

Whose then?
He speaks of love, moongazes and makes songs,
And 'twixt the egg and apple preaches he
How flat and stale are all things without love!
Naught else! An aged spinster nowadays
A braver boon-companion is than he.
Who'll stick the knife in the boar? I ask him:
He
Replies: Were lovelier tresses ever seen
Than Sidselill's? Next I announce: A keg
Of ale hath come. And is she not, he asks,
More graceful than the antelope? Are not
Her eyes, even as the antelope's, great and round?
'Tis well. I say we must bring brandy hither!
The crudest spirits are scarce sharp enough
To antidote such sweetness. Tell me now:
How fares young Sidselill?

DAME ADELUZ

Thanks for the question!
She fares right well.

KARL

Did not the blaring horns
Awaken her?

DAME ADELUZ

How doth it touch thee, Karl?
Thou art not well disposèd toward the child.

KARL

Too well disposed, I tell thee, far too well
To see her without heart-ache! What is she?
A bird of Paradise that's lost its way,
And has nor wings nor feet. Come hither now
And look into the court. For yesterday
I dipped my folly's draw-net and drew forth
Two right brave pike awaggle in life's stream.
Thou knowest them — Schluck and Jau.

DAME ADELUZ

What, Schluck and Jau?
The boisterous sluggards from the valley red?

KARL

The very same

DAME ADELUZ

Surely I know them well.
Who knows them not? In all the country breathe
No other men so tried and so cast out
As these two idle clowns named Schluck and Jau.
My dear, dead husband being forester
In Zips, was well inclined unto this Jau.
But Jau was Jau — shied at the sight of work
As does a hydrophobic dog at water.

KARL

[*At the window.*
Then gaze once more; for this same Jau to-day
Is our most noble prince and goodly lord.

DAME ADELUZ

[*Looks out at the window.*
He whom the huntsmen all surround?

KARL

The same
Who has his left foot on the stirrup now,
And his left hand upon the horse's neck,
The while his valiant right does saw the air.

DAME ADELUZ

And that is Jau?

KARL

Ay, his Serenity Jau,
Who never yet came to a noble's court
For nobler or for cleaner purpose than
To dig his foul way through the refuse-heap,
Searching for bones and rags and half-charred dross
And other wares. Now in high tones he snorts,
And trumpeting like to an elephant,
Makes known his will unto those gentlemen,
As though in life he never had been less
Than a mere sovereign.

DAME ADELUZ

By my faith — 'tis he!
'Tis Jau himself! Come, little Princess, look!
[*She laughs heartily.*
'Tis very certain who has hatched this trick!
None other, Karl, but thou thyself, and I
Would counsel none but thee to do the like.

KARL

Up! Nay, not yet! Look, now he tests the girth.
A huntsman must dismount to fasten it.
Thus! Now behold him! By Saint George, he vaults

Into the saddle like a noble prince,
And keeps his seat like to a falconer.
Aha! The horse begins to dance. Just wait!
I know the steed's most admirable way.
Let but by chance the spur approach his side,
Straight rears he high in air! Behold: he rears,
As I foretold he would. Now keep thy seat,
And show thy horseman's art, Serenity!
Good! Excellent! Not without sense or skill!
Ah, what a leap! Now to an end 'twill come!
He slips! Nay, keeps his seat again; he beckons,
And turns him to the gate. Behold the wight!
He uses the spur, he makes the spark to fly —
The horse is mastered. Well, what thinkest thou?
There rides a noble lord unto the chase.

DAME ADELUZ

I am dumb with wonderment.

KARL

Well then, in brief:
Jau has ahunting gone. Thou viewest him ride.
Schluck, on the contrary, has slept in gaol,
And 'tis on his behalf that I am here.
Receive this Schluck when that I send him hither,
Examine well the nature of the man,
Then train him —'tis a woman's art — as though,
As though he were a jackdaw or a poodle
Until he's rightly fit for our great jest.
He needs experience for what's to come.
And if thou findest Schluck is flexible
Like a good husband, Dame, then see to it
That he (ostensibly in masquerade)
Plays me a woman's part and head to foot

Clad in a queenly splendour, bear himself,
As would the noble mistress of this house.

DAME ADELUZ

Are ye all mad together at this tide?

KARL

And wilt thou be a spoilsport, Adeluz?

DAME ADELUZ

What says Jon Rand to all this wantonness?

KARL

I know not altogether, but I know
That if he speak at all, 'twill scarce be more
Than a masked lover's sigh. But mark this well,
That if the merry jest succeed he'll laugh,
If not he'll do no more than wear a frown.
At present he is well inclined to it.
Ah, well thou takest me! If any one
Can serve our prank — despite thy quiet ways —
Cousin, it is none other than thyself.
And Sidselill will also smile, for Schluck
Is the one man to lure her smiling.

DAME ADELUZ

Hm!

SIDSELILL

[*Calls from the terrace.*

Dame Adeluz, come out unto me here!

KARL

And see that all the women in the castle
Act in an equal spirit with us men,
And treat both Schluck and Jau as that which they
Are meant to simulate.

SIDSELILL

[*As above.*

O Adeluz!

DAME ADELUZ

At once, my princess! . . . Ah, 'tis will; we'll see!

[*Exit to the terrace.*

[KARL *has gone to the door at the right and has opened it.* SCHLUCK *enters.*

KARL

Enter into this room, sit down and wait.

SCHLUCK

Might I, mebbe, be permitted to step up to the chimney and warm myself, sir?

KARL

Assuredly! Go to the chimney straight
And warm thyself. But touch me naught of all
Thou seest in the chamber round about.

SCHLUCK

Oh, goodness gracious me, no! O' course not an' by no means at all! You see, sir, I'm just the weest bit cold, sir, an' so I'd like to warm myself a bit, sir.

[*Exit* KARL.

[SCHLUCK *shivers with frost and warms himself at the fire. He starts suddenly and turns around.*

SCHLUCK

[*To himself.*] Naw, that wasn't nothin'. Aw, but it's nice here — mighty nice! Oh, it's reely very nice here indeed. I ain't very well dressed,

o' course, but that's the way life is, you see. Fine beechwood — that there! Fine beechwood! Eh, I like to hear it crackling thataway! An' I like to smell the smell of it, too.

[DAME ADELUZ *re-enters.*

DAME ADELUZ

A visitor, dear Princess Sidselill.
What doest thou here? What wouldst thou here,
dear friend?

SCHLUCK

I been ordered here, m'lady, if you want me to be quite honest. It ain't nowise my fault, ma'am, an' I'm sorry.

DAME ADELUZ

Who ordered thee hither to come, my friend?
And for what purpose was the summons given?

SCHLUCK

The purpose, ma'am? I can't say as I know rightly myself why I'm here. On my soul an' honour, ma'am, it wasn't no way o' my own free will that I came into this here room. A very fine gentleman took me by the hand an' brought me right in.

SIDSELILL

[*Appears in the door.*

Oh, let him warm himself, dear nurse, at once.
Speak, thou poor man, perhaps thou art even ill?

SCHLUCK

No, m'lady. Thank God, by no means at all, m'lady. My juices are all quite healthy, I'm glad

to say, m'lady. Exceptin' that I got a headache, an' that, m'lady, has a very good an' sufficient cause, if you want me to be quite honest, m'lady. An' I'm cold, that's true too. An' I'm just a bit drunk with sleep. That's what we plain people calls it, m'lady, when we ain't hardly slept at all. Because I ain't been abed these seven days, m'lady, if you want me to be quite honest.

DAME ADELUZ

Where did you pass the night that's gone, my friend?

SCHLUCK

I can't say that I rightly know, if you want me to be quite honest, m'lady. But if I was to tell you the reel truth, m'lady, I'd have to say that I've lain a bit better many a time than las' night. Much better, reely, on my honour an' conscience, you c'n believe me.

DAME ADELUZ

Unless I greatly err thy name is Schluck?
And with another wretched reveller
And boon-companion, thou didst misbehave
Yesterday, toward noon, without the gate.

SCHLUCK

Well now, you see, I can't hardly believe that, m'lady. I'm sorry, reely, to hear you say that. I've always been very well known, if you want me to be quite honest, to all the great people aroun' here, an' I always was known to have a reel soft heart, m'lady. But if I was to tell you, m'lady, all the things I've had to go through in this here

life, I declare to you, m'lady, as it would make you cry. It's the way 'tis set down in the Good Book, m'lady: O death, where is thy victory! That's the way, if you want me to be quite honest.

DAME ADELUZ

Full well I know where thou didst lie last night.
'Twas in the safest keeping; 'twas in gaol,
And thy companion Jau escaped therefrom.

SCHLUCK

Aw, m'lady, I don't like nowise to believe that! O' course, I wouldn't think o' contradictin' you, because I know what good manners is. On my soul an' honour, m'lady, I know what's proper.

DAME ADELUZ

And what's the trade thou drivest, my good friend?

SCHLUCK

Well now, I'll tell you, m'lady: I cut silhouwettes. I'm what you call a reg'lar silhouwette cutter. I do other things, too, if you want me to be quite honest, but mostly I cut silhouwettes. I'm a awful artistic fellow when it comes to that, ma'am.

DAME ADELUZ

Right then! That I desired to know. Hast thou
Brought with thee all thy needed implements?
Therefore from prison did we set thee free
That thou mightst entertain us with thine art.
For look, I know thee well. Behold me close —
Easily mayest thou call me to thy mind —
If not, torment no further thy poor brain.
But take thy tools, assume thy posture. Then
Cut me a silhouette of our princess here

Faithfully to the life. If thou succeed,
Then as our gracious lord instructed us,
Thy sin forgiven, thy punishment remitted,
Thy guilt struck from the book of record out.

SCHLUCK

Well, you see, m'lady, I don't know as I've committed any guilt, if you want me to be quite honest — but, 's far 's that goes, just as soon as I've warmed myself a bit, I got all my tools with me. I always carries my tools with me, m'lady, because you see it's nothin' but a pair o' scissors.

[*He draws forth the scissors.*

SIDSELILL

And shall I sit to him or must I stand?

DAME ADELUZ

Quite as it may be pleasing to thee.

SIDSELILL

Thus?

SCHLUCK

[*Beginning to cut.*] You see, m'lady, I'm prepared for anything. A man has to be prepared for anything in this here world. I don't let nothin' in the world surprise me, m'lady, an' it's that way — if you see what I mean — that I've always gotten along very nicely.

[*A profound feeling of delight becomes visible in his face.*

DAME ADELUZ

Hast thou had any breakfast yet, my friend.

SCHLUCK

I had some breakfast yesterday, m'lady.

DAME ADELUZ

And hast thou no desire for it to-day?

SCHLUCK

I take things as they come, m'lady. I'm prepared for anythin', you see. I'm not so partic'lar about things in this world. An' anyhow, when I begin to cut my silhouwettes I often forget food and drink.

SIDSELILL

Will it be sweet, Adeluz? Do I sit right?

DAME ADELUZ

Excellent! Surely thou knowest thy trade.

SCHLUCK

Oh yes, m'lady, you're reel pleased; I know that. Wherever I come an" do this an' start cuttin'— everybody's pleased. An' nobody didn't learn me that, m'lady — I got that straight from God. I just have to give a look; then I don't hardly have to watch what I'm doin'. I know you'll be pleased with me.

DAME ADELUZ

Princess, shall I now bid him go his way?

SIDSELILL

Oh no! He is so merry! Let him stay!

DAME ADELUZ

Truly unto thyself thou mayest say:

A triumph rare is mine. For thou hast turned
A lily swift into a blushing rose —
Our little princess laughs! Come hither, take
The wine. Strengthen thyself. Thou needest it.

SCHLUCK

Eh, but I'm happy! I'm very happy, indeed, m'lady. I could reely jump I'm so pleased. You see, that's the way it is, as the sayin' goes: don't never despair. You see, if they hadn't a' sent me to gaol last night, I couldn't be so happy to-day. Oh, yes, yes, yes! That's the way o' this here world. Eh, but this tastes good — this is fine, sweet wine. I know this kind o' thing very well. This here little bottle is o' mountain crystal, an' this here is roast veal.

DAME ADELUZ

Take, eat thy fill. Whatever thou dost think it.
We call it morsels of a pheasant's breast —
If it be to thy taste, we are content.

SCHLUCK

Oh, m'lady, reely an' truly, I can't never tell you how happy I am. You see, I could go on cuttin' this way till I die. Oh, you'd hardly believe it, but I feel as good as if I was a bit drunk. You see, if you're pleased with me, I'm a awful artistic fellow.

DAME ADELUZ

The day will add a usefulness to that.
For we are merry folk; and masquerades,
Dances and sports are order of the days
Which here we pass. Our gracious lord himself

Wills and commands that we be merry now
In sturdy, manly wise. A goodly jest,
Even though a tinker of the road have made it —
Sobeit that it delighted him a space —
Makes him who thought it out and put it through,
At once a lord of many lands, in brief,
Unto a wealthy man.

SCHLUCK

You see, I'm done now. I made that very, very fine. I'd like to take the liberty o' helpin' myself to an apple. Them's very nice; I know the kind.

SIDSELILL

[*Regarding the silhouette.*
Oh, really? Is that I? Does my small nose
Tilt in such wise? And is my throat so thin?
Am I so very flat?

DAME ADELUZ

Not without skill
The picture. Jon Rand will delight in it.

SCHLUCK

Le' me make you a present of a lil' pin case all inlaid with silver an' mother o' pearl. I bought it of a peasant's wife. An' you needn't think as I want anythin' in return for it. Them is beans, deep sea beans set in silver. I know ladies what used to make earrings out o' them. You c'n do as you please. But I give it to you.

DAME ADELUZ

And dost thou know our master, excellent Schluck?

SCHLUCK

No, that I don't if you want me to be quite honest. A gentleman brought me here an' I thought mebbe that's the lord. An' yesterday one sent me to gaol an' I thought it was him.

DAME ADELUZ

'Tis not the one and not the other, Schluck,
'Tis neither of the two whom thou didst see.
But if thou prove as clever and obedient
In his strict service as in ours thou art,
Delighting him but half as much as us,
Then daily will his face upon thee shine,
His face and favour; that is very sure,
Thou being the very man to win his grace.
I wish thee well, Schluck, for I know thee well.
By heaven, a fairer fate should thine have been
With thy bright art and with thy clever head
Than play the clown for drunken peasant youths,
Or fare, a peddler, through the villages
Or even beg and hunger, my poor friend.

SCHLUCK

Oh, m'lady, don't make me unhappy, m'lady. 'Cause I'm so very, very happy here. I'll give you everythin' I got on me — just to the last scrap. I'll do anythin' you say. Don't you believe it? Just send me somewhere an' I'll go; put me somewhere an' on my soul an' honour, I'll stay there till I gets mouldy.

DAME ADELUZ

'Tis well. A proof then. Go into yonder room,
And with my silken garment cover thee

Which there thou findest. Then step forth to us
And show that semblance. Hasten to return.

SCHLUCK

Well, well, well, well, m'lady! You want to have your nice joke with me, that you do! An' you see, I'm just like a child when it comes to jokin'. You c'n have all the fun with me you want to. I'll gladly be doin' that, an' why not? I'm glad to do you the favour. An' it won't be the first time neither. You see, m'lady, at the weddin' o' my sister I played the part of a midwife. An' I did it most artistic, I assure you.

[*He disappears through a side door which* DAME ADELUZ *holds open for him.*

DAME ADELUZ

A miserable starveling, this same Schluck!
And yet, were goodness half as dearly prized,
As it by every one on earth is praised,
Then were this admirable starveling Schluck
A Crœsus in this world.

A BANQUETING-HALL WITH BAY-WINDOW

A banqueting-hall with a great bay-window. A long table magnificently set. Huntsmen are busy adorning the table, placing chairs and preparing to serve. Other huntsmen, clad in picturesque costumes and holding their bugles stand on a raised gallery. KARL *is obviously busy superintending the arrangements.* JON RAND *slowly walks the length of the table. The door to the terrace is wide open. A vigorous fire burns in the chimney.*

JON RAND

And does the feast promise great things, my Karl?

KARL

By heaven Jon Rand, wait and thou'llt see indeed
Venison, fish, capons, livers of hares,
And marrowy soup and the wild boar's great head,
And wines of Arbois, Beaune, Chaloce and Grave
And many other things as excellent.

JON RAND

Thou hast, God knows it, many a weakness, Karl —
In feasting art thou strong.

KARL

O my good Jon:
I gather not, as thou dost, in my barns,

Possess no castles and no forests wide
And neither wife nor child. I mount a horse,
Nor ask whose horse it be whereon I ride.
I draw my sword and swing it if need be,
And ask not for what man or for what cause.
And if not all too lowly be the roof
'Neath which I dwell, 'tis not for me to ask
Whose roof it be. And if I sit at board,
I question not how many beakers wine
I empty or how many bites of meat
I eat, whether it please my host or not,
Or if his face grow grey with very rage
O'er my consumption.

JON RAND

Softly, softly, friend!
What if I give thee a small barony,
How would that be, my Karl?

KARL

Keep it, good friend.
I am no badger, do not need a hole.
A barony, a chain about my foot,
A hawk's hood, hiding eyes and head at once!
For I am a wild falcon, not a tame.
What are such things to me? I die my death,—
Must! And would equally live out my life.
Possessions are burdens: do thou bear them, comrade.
What though thy cellars hold thee seas of wine,
Five beakers full suffice to make thee drunk!
Slaughter me forty boars, thou canst not master
The leg of one. Hast thou an hundred castles?
Soon wilt thou be a guest in each of them,
Even as I who have not one. The less

Thou hast, the more is thine in very truth.
The little chain my father left to me,
His sword and bugle — look: I'd give them not
For twenty baronies.

JON RAND

Softly, my friend.

KARL

Try me! Put me to the test. Behold I live
The day but in the day. Yesterday and to-morrow
Were naught and will be naught, though both will be
Steadfast companions of me to that death
Which I cannot escape and do not fear.
Yesterday and to-morrow are two phantoms,
And who would grasp them, grasps but empty air.
To-morrow, yesterday — death ahead, behind,
With life in the to-day. Jau and thyself —
He there, thou here, my Jon, ye wander both
As utter strangers through this wealthy realm
Which will endure when both of ye at length
Are mouldering dust fast hidden in the grave,
And which is his as truly as 'tis thine.

JON RAND

I thank thee for the vesper-sermon, Karl!
Come, let us drink a cup of Spanish wine
Unto a merry pilgrimage, my friend.
At the way's end lour the abyss and night,
The way itself being of the strangest sort.
For if thy stride be firm, it seems to stretch,
Nay, seems not, but does so. But if thou walk
Hesitantly, the abyss is near thine eyes . . .
And thou art hurled below a thousand times,

As often as thy trembling steps advance.
[*Enter* MALMSTEIN, *the master of the hunt.*
Good-morrow, Malmstein. Speak: How fares the
"Prince"?
Awakened probably from his delusion
In the meanwhile. 'Tis this that I have feared
And hence I asked what excellent jest thou didst
Expect from feasting. Came he to his senses?
Did not the nimble air awaken him?
Fell he not from his horse into his ditch,
And in the puddle found himself again,
As oftentimes before?

KARL

Not so: he dreams!

MALMSTEIN

Bravely he bore himself. True, now and then
He tapped his fist against his forehead, thought,
Reflected, mused, and for a moment stopped.
But then with wild hallooing, doubly loud,
The hunt went on.

JON RAND

Where is he now?

MALMSTEIN

He sat in the bath, there snorting like a walrus,
Sang, groaned and giggled and talked unto himself,
And called himself Serenity again.
The chamber swam. The water penetrated
To the very door where all our maids and pages
Writhed in convulsions with suppressèd laughter,
Fearing betrayal of the jest.
[*General laughter.*

KARL

Musicians!
Excellent buglers! Heed the command I give!
A blast when that he enters! When he rises
Another blast, and one when he withdraws!
And, huntsmen, wait upon him courteously!
Who laughs shall taste the rod! Let it be clear
That he is prince to-day.

JON RAND

Prince let him be.
Solemnly I relinquish all my rights
Unto *his* station in this foolery!
[*Referring to* KARL.

MALMSTEIN

Thy pardon, lord —

JON RAND

Physician!

MALMSTEIN

Ah, thy pardon!
My lord physician, his Serenity Jau
Is hither on his way. And they have stuck
A field-flower in his diadem to be
A trophy of the hunt. And 'tis high time
That he be brought into society
For mannerliness. For, in all innocence,
He grins and squints already at the maids
As though they were fat quails, well-boiled and fresh,
And when the pages clad him in his robes,
Twice, thrice he called aloud after his spouse,
Desiring that, even before the feast,
The " princess " be brought to him.

KARL

Let him be!
Even now a princess is provided for.
He comes! Silence! Each man upon his post!

[JAU, *garbed in princely fashion, enters with his train. He has on the pasteboard crown of the second scene adorned with a rabbit's tail. The huntsmen blow a blast. He starts for a moment.*

JAU

[*Stops and motions for silence.*] 'Tis all right, all right! We don't want all that there noise! Even if a man is a prince, he might have a lil' quiet now an' then!

KARL

Will your Serenity deign to take a seat?

JAU

What you want me to take? If there's anythin' to take, I'll take it all right. Don't worry! How many of us is there?

KARL

The smaller company your Highness did
Command — nine without your high self.

JAU

Well, sit down then! Sit down an' fill your bellies! I don't mind givin' it to you. [*He sits down and remains seated during the following.*] Naw, hol' on! Git up! All o' you! Git up again! All together! [*To* JON RAND, *who has barely lifted himself.*] Is your breeches glued to your chair, eh? The steward c'n sit next to me;

the doctor c'n go over there. If he sets next to me he'll tell me a pack o' lies about what my father dreamed or sich! Now hand me somethin'! I wants to eat!

[KARL *beckons to the huntsmen. The dishes are being carried in. The meal begins with another blast of trumpets. With difficulty the courtiers suppress their laughter.*

KARL

[*Rising.*

Serenity! True companions of the chase!
A huntsman's hail I bring ye! Once again
We sit at this rich board, as oft before,
Which through the goodness of our noble prince
Is daily decked anew. But this one day —
Even though the radiance of a golden Fall
Throw a whole host of days incomparable
Into our lap — this day is of all days
The highest, this festivity above all
Our revels and our daily merry feasts.
And why? Ye know it, good companions all,
Whose faithful eyes with moisture are agleam,
Adown whose noses pearly tear-drops roll —
Your feeling shows your knowledge! Goodly friends . . .

JAU

[*Interrupting.*] Hol' on! Is all this here cooked in butter?

JON RAND

In freshest, purest butter, my good lord.

JAU

You got a lil' liver on your plate, eh? [*He reaches over and picks up the morsel, transferring it to his own plate.*] That was for me. You c'n go on with your speechification.

KARL

[*Continuing.*

After long years for the first time to-day —
Arisen from a long and heavy illness —
Our prince once more adorns this table round
Which, without him, was orphaned — ah, how much!
What is the morn without the morning-star?
What is the evening without Hesperus?
What is the crown without its diamond?
And what the day without God's goodly sun?
All that were we, in truth, without our prince,
His high Magnificence now seated here.
Ah, my dear friends, my voice trembles, my heart
Sobs with remembered woe, my very entrails
Melt at the memory of those heavy years
Wherein a direful bane of illness cast
Our lord so deeply into suffering,
In which this lofty and imperial prince,
Surrounded by the wealth of Solomon,
Blinded by some fell demon's power, did seem
Poor as a churchmouse suddenly to himself.
What was it, O sublime and noble lord,
That overcame you in those days when you
Became a changeling to the very soul?
For by the living God you spoke and thought
And acted like a man whose bed is chaff,
Like one fast wedded to a washerwoman
Who daily trounces him with fist and stick.

And you devoured rank meat, bread-crusts and
cheese,
And drank skimmed milk, and sour fermented
whey;
As bites delectable appeared to you
The chops of dogs and horses. Five great onions
I have beheld you eat (before mine eyes)
Raw as yourself had dug them from the earth.

JAU

[*Roars out.*] An' them's good! You got any?
Hand 'em here! You slack critters!

KARL

[*Continuing.*
And meanwhile rats and mice did multiply
In all your castles. Cold was every hearth.
The foxes in the cellars housed themselves,
The rabbits nested in the garden-beds,
An evil sickness raged among the cooks
And profound mourning reigned throughout the
land.
Your Highness suffered, but your suffering was
Unconscious, at the least. But we meanwhile,
Beheld the horror with wide-open eyes.
Ah, how your spouse did wring her snowy hands!
Your favourite steed fell dead; your noble hounds
Howled through the night and died when morn-
ing came!
A hundred leeches, Turks and Saracens
And Greeks and Jews displayed their various arts
And pitifully failed. Ah, gracious lord,
Daily we lay about this table here
For two long years, swallowing our throttling grief
With venison and capon and wild boar,

With field-fares and with turkeys and with truffles —
And yet our mood, the more we did devour,
Grew still more desperate. Our lamentation,
The more we drank to deaden it, burst forth
More wildly and more piercingly at last.
And now, dear lord, you are well!
Once more your self is given back to us!
Sunlike you gleam once more upon your place;
In your warm beams do we thaw out again,
And breathe again and drink unto your weal,
And as my goblet thus I raise on high,
And set it to my lips and drink it down,
Forgotten is the anguish of the years.
May your Serenity live long! Live long!

[*They all arise and clink glasses with* JAU.

JAU

[*Visibly moved.*] Sit down, sit down, sit down! [*They all resume their seats.* JAU *arises and in silent emotion embraces* KARL *who has remained standing.*] Now you see! You see! It's all correct, all right! An' now it's all straightened out again! Aha! Yes! An' that's a fac'! There musta been somethin' wrong with me. Well, all right. Now we c'n have a good time. Well, well, well, well! I musta been sick. Doctor, I don't mind if you do come an' sit next to me. It ain't your fault that I was sick. Come ahead, come ahead! It's all right. But didn't you say about me awhile ago, that there wasn't nothin' but a nightmare a-ridin' me an' that I'd been a-huntin' yesterday?

JON RAND

Ah, your Magnificence, this was my thought:

To call up memories of happy days;
And thus I spake of that far hunt of yours,
The last of all, as though 'twere yesterday.
And though I lost your favour for the nonce,
Never shall I regret, most gracious lord,
That with this falsehood I awakened you.

JAU

[*Slaps his knee.*] Don't you say another word! That's all right now! Don't you say nothin' more! We'll be friends now, doctor! there, take a drink! [*He gives his goblet to* JON RAND *who drinks not without revulsion.*] Well now, I'll tell you the truth — that's what I'll do. I noticed it all right as how I hadn't been a-huntin' in a long while. Only I didn't want to let on; but I knowed it all right. When I was sittin' on that there hoss I felt like I was sittin' on mill-stones what was goin' aroun' an' aroun' an' aroun'. But watch out! All that'll come back to me.

MALMSTEIN

Naught has been marked of that, Serenity!
And all companions of our hunt agree:
Wildly as ever did we ride to-day,
Through your incomparable horsemanship.

JAU

Well, mebbe so, mebbe so. Anyhow that'll all come out all right if you gives it time. That's all.

JON RAND

And the great matter is, most noble lord,
That in the circle you be not ensnared
Of wild delusions which you have escaped.

I pray your Highness: keenly watch yourself,
And let the world of phantoms and of sick
Delusions die, as now, within your breast.
And if, by chance, the visions now and then
Ghastly and evil press upon you hard,
Then make your will to be like glowing steel
And sere the evil forth! For, without doubt,
Even as bubbles from a swampy ground
Arise and to the surface come and then
Bursting, ignite — even to the surface thus
Of your bright soul the will o' the wisps will rise
And show themselves and fill your heart with dread.

JAU

Stuff an' nonsense! Talk! Talk Talk! Give us a chance, mister! We ain't in no sich hurry! My boots is mine? Is that there any o' your business? Le's have music an' wine! Drink till your belly busts! An' if I gotta drink up all my few rags an' all my earnin's an' Moses an' the prophets, an' pour 'em all down my gullet. . . . Hol' on! Wha's that I said? No, no, no, no. Wha's all that again. Slow there, ol' hoss, slow! I tell you what, doctor. This here don't suit me. When I git to talkin' rot again, you just dig me in the ribs! You hear?

JON RAND

I'll take a bell and ring, my gracious lord
Whenever danger threatens to approach.

JAU

Here's to you, doctor! An' to you, steward! It's all right, all right! That's a bad business

about that there huntin', but I know all about it now. That there beast hangin' there — I shot him. That's the one. A year an' half ago. Shot him through the heart. There he lay. There he lay dead as a pig. I remember it like as if it was to-day. I had a king a-visitin' me just then — a genuine king, an' he never couldn't hit nothin'. He could shoot pretty well, but he never hit nothin'— naw! I hit the beast. Dead as a pig. He didn't so much as give a groan.

[*General laughter.* JAU *starts in surprise, then joins in the laughter with such vehemence that the others fall silent.*

KARL

Surely your Highness minds the day when far
We stalked the chamois in the Caucasus
And at the risk of your most precious life
Into its fastnesses a hind you followed —
With me, your faithful servant, after you.
Suddenly we stood solitary there
High above earth and cloud. With one loud bleat
And one huge leap the chamois measured thrice
The length of this great hall and thus was gone
Beyond our reach. What should we do? Go back?
My head spun round with me, my knees gave way,
One prayer of fear I muttered, two or three —
The while you calmly filled your little pipe
And said: "The devil take it!" Thus you spake:
"It blows up here and cools the heated blood.
Splendid the view although the beast is lost;
For well or ill we must even stagger home."
And with that you did seize me by the coat,
Turned me about, lifted me up, until,

By heaven I sat upon your princely back,
And bore me valleywards without ado,
Safe, sound, to the astonishment of all
Who had despaired of you and me alike.

JAU

Well, o' course, steward, who'd know more about that there than me. When it comes to sich things, I tell you, there ain't much nonsense about me. No! Things go flyin', you might say. Feel this arm o' mine here! It ain't made o' curd, eh? Nothin' soft, eh? Well, o' course not! An' feel my leg here! You could chop wood on it. An' ain't it natural when you come to think? A man like me don't have to stint hisself! I got the money to buy things with. I c'n afford it! Limbs an' bones like mine — you don' get 'em from cucumber soup. O' course I know all about that. I'm a grand fellow, I am. That's 'cause I come o' good stock. I'll go an' I'll pick up three hundred weight without so much as crookin' my lil' finger! Le's have a drink! Here's to you, gentlemen! I tell you, that there time — where the devil was it? I been travellin' too much; I can't remember all them places. But I c'n tell you: there ain't no nonsense about me! When I reely gits to feel like it, I c'n take two like you an' put 'em on my back. You want me to lift that there stand? Watch out then! Look at me! [*He takes hold of an iron candelabrum of great weight, tries quite in vain to lift it, but stands in conscious triumph as sallies of applause meet him from all sides.*] Why, me — I dragged sacks o' wheat that time at the farmer's. I worked for the farmer three weeks. Two sacks at once I used to carry

from the top store room right down into . . .

[JON RAND *rings the bell.*

JAU

Hol' on! What was I sayin'? Aw, that just happened to come out! Keep still, there! All right, doctor. I know. Hol' your tongue. But I tell you people: I feel comfortable here, reel comfortable, that I do! Ain't there nobody here what c'n sing somethin'? An' ain't there no women in this place? I'm mighty well what you might call disposed. I'm ready for all kinds o' fun, I am! Aw well, now about that there huntin'. I could go an' tell all kinds o' stories. But o' course, you gotta keep your eyes open. An' why? A roast cat may be all right; but roast hare is better! Ain't that right? A roast hare with dumplin's on Sunday, an' I ain't much concerned with parson or church. Only — you mustn't be caught at the poachin'— that's all. You lays your wires an' your snares — an' once when I was walkin' in the country with Schluck . . .

[JON RAND *rings the bell.*

JAU

Hol' on! I was goin' to say. . . . Doctor, what in hell's the matter? This has gotta stop! That's what I tell you! Once an' for all. I ain't agoin' to be kept in this kind o' confisticated shudder o' fear all the time. It's enough to make a man sweat blood. What's the dam' use o' bein' a prince? I drink my wine: I like my vittles, I feel fine anyhow. But don't you go botherin' me. 'Cause if you do, if you annoys me — then it's all over. You jus' keep on. . . . Oh, you jus' keep

on, by Gawd! I'll let it go this here time. But if I go an' get riled, well. . . . [*On the gallery above he suddenly observes* SIDSELILL *and* DAME ADELUZ. *He stares up, forgets his rage and asks.*] Who's that there?

KARL

If your Serenity will but regard!
Yonder is Princess Sidselill, your daughter,
She and her tiring-lady Adeluz.
Your wish to hear songs and stringed instruments
Was brought unto her by my messenger,
And so she now appears, the noble maid,
Obedient heartily, humbly prepared
With her sweet singing to delight us all.

JAU

[*Continuing to stare upward.*] Well, o' course, I know. Naturally. O' course. Keep still. Hol' on, who was that girl?

KARL

'Tis Princess Sidselill, your Highness's daughter.

JAU

Aha! Hm! O' course, o' course! Funny! What was the name?

SIDSELILL

[*Sings to the harp.*
I touch the harp to music soft and sweet . . .

JAU

What's she touchin'!

KARL

Hush, your Serenity, hush!

SIDSELILL

I touch the harp to music soft and sweet —
Its breathing scarce is heard.

JAU

Naw, you can't hardly hear it.

SIDSELILL

And my soul wanders through the deeps of space,
A solitary bird.
Unfriended must I go.
Ah, my belovèd's laughter hurts me so:
It is too sweet!

JAU

Sugar an' syrup!

SIDSELILL

How shall I live, wanting that all too sweet?
The day will come. For all the days are fleet.

JAU

You wants to sing a bit louder!

SIDSELILL

I know! I know!
I am alone.
The great clouds travel through the autumnal heaven,
And I myself am but a cloud — soon gone —
A little cloud of spring, soon gone . . .

JAU

That's all right! That's all right! Ain't it? By Gawd, I'm cryin' same 's if I'd been takin' snuff. Nice! Mighty nice! She knows her busi-

ness! Ain't I right? She could go an' earn pennies an' pennies in the booth with the Bohemian musicians. I liked that fine! What was she singin'? Somethin' about a purty lil' cloud? Eh, that's the way o' the world. I got a girl at home, lemme tell you, she ain't so different from a cloud neither. An' that boy o' mine. He's a hell of a fellow. He c'n drink more whiskey'n me. An' keep it up, too. You c'n believe me. An' anyhow. . . . Our family has always had heads on their shoulders — that they have. Everyone of 'em. There ain't never been a one but has had a head on him. My boy has, too — a head that'd give you all some light. [*Speaking upward to* SIDSELILL.] You hear, you bit o' lamb? Your health! I c'n sing too! Your health! I c'n sing too. Mebbe you think I can't. Mebbe you all think I can't sing? On account o' that bit o' goitre on my throat? Pshaw! Just listen to me! I bet there ain't nobody else in this here company that c'n sing a song as fine an' as smooth as me! There never wasn't a Jau yet that didn't have the gift o' singin'!

"Oh, a poor man is what I am. . . ."

[*An attendant bursts out laughing.*] Well, I won't! I don't reely feel like it. But I c'n do it. We Jaus c'n all sing. An' that's because we're ambitious. We're ambitious all ways, you see. Ambition, you see, that's the main thing! An' industry! To be stirrin' an' doin' somethin' — that's it! Industry! Your health! An' if I hadn't been an ambitious fellow — O Lordy! Well, I wouldn't be sittin' here! I'm not afraid o' no kind o' work, you see! Maybe you think I'm drunk, eh? Oh, if my wife was to see that!

If she could see it — I'd be willin' to die to-morrow.

"Oh a poor man is what I am;
Little have I to eat.
My wife she has the breeches on. . . ."

Aw, let's drink! Let's be drunk! It all comes to the same thing now! But the kind o' fellows we are — well, we'll show them rotten hayseeds, we will. An' to-morrow we'll go down to the village! You, lil' cloud up there! Sing another!

"A farmer had three daughters. . . ."

Your health! But if onst I was to git to singin' reely, you'd all prick up your ears. I'd like to see who c'n do it better:

"O Rosie, if you were but mine,
Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes."

[*He sings seriously and with true feeling.*

"Before I go unto my rest,
I'd seek the dear that I love best;
Oh, though she's safe with wall and lock,
She'd open to my gentle knock."

[JON RAND *rings.*

KARL

Your spouse, her Highness, begs for a word with you.

JAU

[*Quite taken aback.*] How? What? What's all this here? For Gawd's sake, where am I? For the sake o' all things, hurry an' tell me. Who's comin' there? Here, steward, you tell me! I'm dreamin', mebbe! How? What? Is she a shrew, the princess? I been dreamin' of a shrew. . . .

KARL

A shrew? Our dear and gracious princess here?
Oh, none is milder, none is lovelier, sire,
Than our sweet mistress — best of all her kind.

JAU

All right. Agreed. Let her come an' enter! I got a bit mixed up, doctor! Mebbe so! Kind o' mixed an' fixed an' hazy an' dazy. But now I'm planted on my two legs again. So!

KARL

One word, your Highness. But one grave word more:
I beg of you, beg of you on my knees,
Be strong, be wary, steadfast at this hour,
And drive your will, as though it were a spade
Clean through the root of your delusive ill,
And recognise your lady. Thrust her not
Away from you: grow well at last in this,
Your weakest point. Receive our princess straight
As what she was, of old, to you and us,
A woman, not a man and call her by
That worthy name which is her due and not
By muttered names which madness forced on you.
[*He admits* SCHLUCK.

JAU

Aw, that's all dam' nonsense! You're all goin' crazy more like. A woman's a woman an' a man's a man. I've known all about that all my life.

[SCHLUCK *enters, attired like a princess and escorted by* ADELUZ. *The huntsmen blow a blast.* SCHLUCK *curtsies thrice very profoundly.* JAU *has arisen invol-*

untarily and, with head thrown back, observes SCHLUCK *sharply.* SCHLUCK *remains standing at some distance from* JAU *as the music falls silent.* JAU *looks about helplessly for a moment, then forms a desperate resolve, stretches out his arms, approaches* SCHLUCK *and embraces him.*

JAU

Well, ol' woman, we'll make up again, eh?

[SCHLUCK *embraces* JAU *with an exaggeration of tenderness and squeaks endearments in a falsetto voice.*

JAU

[*Suddenly takes fright, starts back and cries.*] Schluck!

KARL

For the sake of heaven, your Magnificence,
Come to your senses! Do not speak that name!

[SCHLUCK *curtsies to all sides and turns himself about with a dance-like motion.*

JAU

[*Looks at him for a while in astonishment, grasps his head and calls out abruptly and vehemently.*] Schluck!

SCHLUCK

[*In his falsetto.*] I'm your wife, my sweet prince, that's what I am — a nice, soft lil' wifie an' no Schluck, no Schluck at all. I'm a woman an' no man at all. [*Dropping his part suddenly.*] You see I got fine clothes on. You see, if you want

me to be quite honest, I'll tell you the truth: I'm a reg'lar woman, so help me! Oh, no, go on! You c'n believe me! [*Affectedly, as though repulsing unseemly liberties.*] No, no, no, no! That ain't proper you know. Oh no! An' when I say that's enough, I mean it! I'm that ashamed before so many fine gentlemen — I'm that ashamed, I don't know what to do. [*Forgetting his part again and addressing* KARL.] If I had a fan you see, just a fan, I could do all this a bit more artistic. But it'll do, it'll do, it'll do thisaway. I know a purty song, a mighty purty song.

"O husband mine, O husband mine!
She was so good and was so fine.
But when the husband home came he,
There stood the horses, one, two, three.
'And tell me now, my wife most dear,
What are these horses doing here?'"

[*He imitates the crying of an infant and acts frightened.*] O Lordy, the baby's cryin'! Hush! Hush! Hush! Keep still, will you! [*He pretends to be spanking a child, imitates the child's supposed weeping and speaks.*] Will you keep still, you brat? I axes you, will you keep still? [*Forgetting his part again.*] You see, I c'n imitate that fine. I learned that from a travellin' apprentice onct. It'd deceive anybody. It's as reel as reel.

"'What are these horses doing here?'
'They're cows my mother sent to me!'
'O cows with saddles at my door!
A cuckold I, like many more!'"

JAU

You just go right ahead. By Gawd, that's a

devil of a woman. Her vittles musta gone to her head!

SCHLUCK

[*Frightened.*] No, you see, that's the way you gotta do it if you want to be natural like. I onct saw a company o' strollin' players do it.

" And when up on the stairs came he
He saw the mantles, one, two, three.
'And tell me now, my wife most dear,
What are these mantles doing here?'
'They're cloths my mother sent to me!'
'O cloths with pockets at my door!
A cuckold I, like many more.'"

[*He jumps up to embrace* JAU.] Give me a buss! I gotta go to my child!

JAU

[*Repulses him, now thoroughly frightened.*] Git outa my way, you devil, you! Out with that critter! Out with her! Or I'll run away! I never was no better in my life! An' if that's my wife, then it's her as has made me sick. Hitch up the horses! I'm goin'! You c'n all come along! There ain't no use in that! You c'n go an' stick a pole in the dirt, an' hang an ol' fustian petticoat over it an' clap an' ol' night-cap with ribands on top of it — you c'n do all that, but it won't be no woman! Y' understan' me?

[*Exit swiftly with attendants.*

SCHLUCK

[*After the wild laughter of those who remained behind has fallen silent, speaks to* KARL *and* ADELUZ. *He is pale and hesitant.*] Did I do it

right, my dear sir? I just did the very best I could, sir, just the very best. But I stepped on a thorn — that I did. You c'n see for yourself, m'lady, that you can. An', please to remember, too, that I always did have a few days for practicin' my part, you see.

THE COURTYARD OF THE CASTLE

The castle-yard with the old nut trees. From the great doorway of the castle come, laughing and chatting, JON RAND, KARL *and others.*

JON RAND

The jest succeeded passably, my friend.

KARL

The other day I shot an owl, a fellow
Of thirteen pounds. My excellent dog came swift
And grasped the mighty creature in its fangs.
Scarcely restraining his deep pride and joy,
He dutifully bore the prey to me.
Alas, the slain owl trailed along the ground
Its dead and broken wing, and in the midst
Of his delight the hound upon it stepped,
And ever lost the bird from out his grasp.
Not otherwise bears Jau his majesty!
And if the jest lasts longer he will break
His bones and eke his neck.

JON RAND

But listen, Karl!
I wondered greatly that he did not waken
When that he saw his queen in shape of Schluck.
He sleeps and wakes. 'Tis true and very strange.
A dangerous waking to a dangerous sleep!
Once only he said "Schluck!"

KARL

Nay twice, my Jon.

JON RAND

So be it. Yet 'twas but one luminous
Moment. Schluck, on the other hand
Knew not his friend and brother in the least.
He was so utterly the queen herself,
And was fulfilled so of his mission high,
That he, in truth, did neither see nor hear
And unsuspiciously against his will
Helped utterly to blind his other self,
Heart of his heart and dear Pylades, Jau.
And my one fear is lest the latter, seeing
His dream dispersed, loose utterly his mind.

KARL

Not so! Take but the 'broidered cloak from him
And easily he'll slip into the rags
Which, neatly tied into a bundle, lie
Safe in the warder's keeping. Dress is dress.
A little shabbier is his own indeed,
But made for him and snug upon his limbs.
And since 'tis of the same material wrought
As dreams — his equally with ours — and since
We to the things that round about us are,
Stand closer not than unto dreams, and thus
Not nearer than the utter stranger Jau —
'Tis clear that from our heaven of mortal things
He'll save scarce less into his lowly realm
Than we ourselves. How? What? Are we much more
Than naked sparrows? More than this poor Jau?
Scarcely I think! For what we really are
Is little more than what he really is:

Our highest happiness is soap-bubbles.
We blow them with the breath of our very hearts,
Love them, aspire to them far in the blue,
Until they burst. Behold, he does the same.
He will be free, hereafter as before,
To practice these eternal, constant arts.

JON RAND

Well said, in truth. Then are these soap-bubbles
Worth something and he well provided for
Even though I spare the ducats, Karl, which I
Had destined for him.

[*The noise of laughter is heard in the castle.*

Listen! What is that?

KARL

'Tis the new queen holds her procession, Jon,
With all the maids and women of the castle.
Dame Adeluz has put away her grief,
And has adorned herself with wreaths of asters,
As for a wedding-feast.

JON RAND

Ah, Dame Adeluz!
Smells she not rosemary? Wears mourning weeds?
Grieving her second husband's death?

KARL

Quite wrong!
She has put on a riband gay and bright
And carries the queen's train.

JON RAND

If she put forth

Autumnal blossoms, let her beware the frost!
May God grant her a clement winter.— Ho!
What dost thou there, Fool?

THE FOOL

I am twisting hemp!

JON RAND

Wherefore? Wouldst thou be a rope-maker?

THE FOOL

Nay,
A hangman, my good lord.

JON RAND

Whom wouldst thou hang?

THE FOOL

Myself. The times are robbing me of bread;
And carnival has burst forth round about,
And your own folly has o'ertaken mine.
I am become a wise man and must hang.

JON RAND

Oh, let that madness be set yet more free!
Bring tables, benches and the new-made wine!
Oh, whirl your limbs and dance! 'Tis well to dance
Upon that golden fleece of fallen leaves
Which our old nut-tree gently lays on earth.
Dance me a dance! Bring hither the new wine!
Autumnal fruits bring hither and let all
Rifle the platters high. And take the gay
Strands of the vine and wreathe your temples round
Let the delight be bacchic! Soon it dies!

Winter, the ermine-garbed grave-digger old
Stands ready at the door, a cere-cloth white
In his cold hands. And welcome let him be
When these last summer echoes die away.
Yea, for I yearn after his garment white.
Oh, in this sea of merriment, my heart
Longs for the shore of winter's boundless rest.

[*Tables and benches are placed about; wine and platters of fruit are brought. From the castle comes a procession of fair women led by* SCHLUCK *who is still disguised as a princess.* DAME ADELUZ, *gaily adorned with ribands, carries his train. A comely lad beats upon the drum; another plays the pipe. In the procession is* SIDSELILL.

KARL

Delights it not the heart to see a queen?

JON RAND

Does she not bear hope of posterity?

KARL

Then it behooves to summon god-parents.

SCHLUCK

Hol' on! Go it a bit easy! Just a little bit easy, if you please! Or you'll be tearin' this lovely dress.

DAME ADELUZ

O excellent majesty, what is't you say?
The garment that you wear is yours, and this
I wear no less. And I myself, O queen,
Am your possession as are all these here

Who stand in readiness to serve your need.
Happy the silk-worms who have spun the dress
That has the grace your bosom to enfold!
Happy the tree that fed the busy worms!
Thrice happy web that, at your need, is torn.

JON RAND

Prettily said, with admirable taste.

KARL

Thou'dst find her even more unto thy taste,
If thou but sawest the little shift she wears
Which she herself embroidered and adorned,
And many other things that she has on.

SCHLUCK

Oh, m'lady! I know very well you're playin' at theayter, m'lady. But if you'll have the kindness. . . .

[*The girls surround him and thrust their hands into his face.*

FIRST GIRL

Will you take a whiff of perfume?

SECOND GIRL

Or of wild thyme?

THIRD GIRL

Or of mignonette and wall-flower?

FOURTH GIRL

Or of the vanilla bean?

FIFTH GIRL

Onion, perhaps?

FIRST GIRL

Or musk?

SECOND GIRL

Or garlic?

SCHLUCK

What you mean? What kind o' beans? Oh, m'ladies! No! No! If you please! You're havin' a reel amusin' time, m'ladies. But if you'll just go a leetle bit more easy. You see, I got a pimple on my nose like, an' everytime, you see, you hit it, it just hurts me a bit, m'ladies.

DAME ADELUZ

Be not quite so unmannerly, young folk!
Press not so hard upon our lovely queen.

SCHLUCK

I likes to join in your game, that I do. An' it's awful nice an' purty. Only just go a bit easy, just a leetle more easy, if you please.

[DAME ADELUZ *intentionally steps on his train.*

SCHLUCK

Oh da—! Eh! Now you see, you see for yourself!

DAME ADELUZ

Ah, for the sake of heaven, sweet majesty.

SCHLUCK

Now you tore the train, m'lady. You see, that's just what I been sayin'. 'Tain't no fault o' mine an' the dress is gone. There ain't no use mendin'

or darnin' it, m'lady. You see, I know, 'cause I learned the tailorin' trade for three years, m'lady, yes, for three years.

THE GIRLS

The dance! The dance!

[THE GIRLS *form a circle and dance about* SCHLUCK. SIDSELILL, *who is dancing with them, suddenly utters a loud and not entirely harmonious cry in her delight.*

JON RAND

Who was that, Karl?

KARL

Oh, it was Sidselill.

JON RAND

Nay!

KARL

Ay, it was in truth!

JON RAND

It was not she.
It was the screaming of a kitchen-maid,
And not the sweet voice of my turtle-dove.

KARL

Regard these women, how they reel and sway
Hot and dishevelled in the rounds of dance.
They pant, they laugh; mænad-like flash their feet
And whirl their unbound tresses and their lips
Are famished. Half-unconsciously they turn!
Yet all too conscious of herself is each,
Hastening irresistibly from herself.

Mysterious all. For though it were not Schluck
They danced about, but any stock or stone,
Or hewn or carvèd into any shape —
Yet here were still their native element:
Here they are their true selves and here they live
Their life which else is but a living death.
Grudge not the child the moment fleet and rare
Wherein she can forget herself and thee,
Wherein she is grasped, though in this cage of life,
By memories of wild freedom and delight
On plains illimitable, and her joy
Breaks forth like unto crying of wild birds.

THE GIRLS

[*Sing.*

Dance the roundelay, the last,
For to-morrow we must fast,
And arise in the cold dawn
And to holy church be gone.

[SIDSELILL *after her brief laughter has withdrawn shamefacedly from the dance.* JON RAND *receives her with open arms.*

JON RAND

Does all this please thee? So it seems, in truth!
Else did thy cheeks not bear that delicate glow.

[*To* KARL.

Behold, of her free will she comes to me.

KARL

And why does she come back? Ah, I will tell thee!
If a wheel creaks or a worker in the fields
Whets loud his sickle and by chance the sound
Comes to thine ear — thou art vexed nigh to death;

A misery is painted in thy face
So full of torment that each human soul
Hastes to thy help; and even so this child.
Am I not right, dear Princess Sidselill?
Not like a gleam of sunlight is thy glance:
It sinks into the blood as sourness sinks
Into sweet milk, fermenting it at once.
Take heed: For one who on such rigid limbs
The boredom of his noble self exhibits,
How easily may swift usurpers snatch
From him the highest station in the state.

[*He penetrates the rows of dancing maidens and bows profoundly before* SCHLUCK.

Most gracious queen, loveliest of womankind!
O angel in thy clouds of golden hair!
Oh, condescend unto thine humble knight
Who, drunken with thy loveliness does pray
For favour of a dance.

SCHLUCK

Oh, my dear sir, I'm so glad, that I am, to be talkin' to you again, my dear sir. You see, sir, I'm tryin' all I can to carry this thing off right. On my honour an' conscience, I am, sir. An' I know that you gotta just *be,* if you want to act. But you see, I got a wife at home. . . . If I could just run over there for a minit, sir! I'd just like to run over for a little minit, sir, an' let her know.

KARL

What? Are my looks awry? Mine ears untuned?
And didst thou truly utter what I heard?
And does this rattle of icy words that lashes
Me as with thongs, proceed from thee? Is it thou

Who slakes my thirst but with the molten lead,
Which still corrodes me with its inward fire?
O queen most exquisite and worthy of love. . . .

SCHLUCK

What's that you're sayin', sir? Hot lead, sir? Just listen to me one leetle minit, if you please, sir. You're just jokin', I know. I understand that all right. I been so much with fine people, *that* I have. I ain't doin' this here for the first time. But you see, sir, my wife is kinda easy vexed, that she is, sir, an' I'd run as fast as I could an' git right back here again. But she's kinda easy vexed, sir, an' I'd like to let her know.

KARL

From all thy words, O queen, there issues forth,
As sombre as the beating of death's bell,
Ever and ever the one word — disfavour!

[*He kneels before her with elaborate humility.*

How, in the name of God, have I deserved it?
Were not, in tournaments, thy colours mine?
Blunted I not for thee three-hundred spears?
Didst thou not pour, late on a moonlit night,
Grateful for a lovesong I sang to thee
From thy high window an earthen vessel filled
With turbid water? And did I not hack
My finger off for thee? Here is the stump!
Fared I not to Jerusalem because
Thy high command did send me, noble lady?
Help me beseech, dear maidens, help me swift
Soften the lady's adamantine heart.

[*He and all the members of the dance kneel.*

SCHLUCK

No, it's a fine joke, that it is sir, I admit. But if you'll do me just one leetle favour you'll be gittin' right up, sir. Oh, no, no, when you come to think out all this, reely think of it. . . . No, if you'll just do me the one favour, sir, an' git up. You see, sir, if you want me to be quite honest, I don't hardly know what to do. [*Half tearfully.*] It's reel vexatious like, sir. I'd like it reel well, sir — I'd like it reel well, ladies, if you'd just be so kind an' just let me know how . . . because you see [*he weeps*] I don't hardly know what to do or how to behave. [*The girls crowd around him and kiss him.*] Oh, no, no! You're awful kind to me, that you are! But it's a good thing my wife wasn't here. Because, you see, women is kinda easy vexed, that they are. An' then, before you know it, you get a thwack with the poker.

JON RAND

[*As* SIDSELILL *kisses him.*

Thou too? Behold, behold? Who shaketh down
So many fruits from the sweet tree of love?
What dost thou bring to pass, excellent Schluck?
If thou art in sweet magic skilled, my man,
I'll make thee chancellor in my realms of love.

KARL

Think not these kisses warm are meant for him.
Each maiden does her secret idol kiss
That's treasured in the chambers of her heart.

JON RAND

It may be so and yet it warms his skin!

Aha! What hast thou there? Show me, my child!

DAME ADELUZ

[*Exhausted, in passing.*

'Twas Schluck that cut it for her, Lord —
Her silhouette! Now she does nothing else
But turn the little leaf from side to side
Rejoicing in her image which it shows.

JON RAND

If I were thou, I'd do the self-same thing
And love myself and no one else at all.
[*He holds the silhouette and admires it.*
Be moderate, not all too gay, my Karl.
Schluck wept and grew affrighted suddenly.
For, from this madness that surrounds him here —
Although he scents amidst it all, methinks,
A serious profit for him in the end,—
He wished himself a thousand miles away
A moment since; I saw it in his face.

KARL

Oh, let him steer his way a little while
In this delightful sea of girlish bodies.
Trust me: He will regain his strength straightway!
Ah, Adeluz, where is thy widow's veil?
The queen gives me the mitten! Let it grasp
Thee as my soft, sweet, ripe and juicy fruit.

SCHLUCK

Oh, no, no, an' by no means, I didn't give you no mittens, sir. But things was goin' so fast that I didn't rightly understand, sir, what you was

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meanin' exackly. You see, sir, when it comes to ticklish matters, as is the way o' speakin', I know all about them, too, you c'n believe me, sir. In the pubs you see, sir, they axes for all kinds o' things. Now I understand, I see very well, sir, what you been drivin' at. You see, sir, when it comes to things that's just a bit, just kinda — you know what I mean — I'm well up in them, too. Only you gotta be very careful with that kind, 'cause you don't never know exackly how . . .!

DAME ADELUZ

[*In* KARL'S *arms.*

All that thou sayest, queen, is purest gold,
And in the crystal river of thy speech
Float only orient pearls.

SCHLUCK

Would you like me to cut you out one or two very naughty silhouwettes?

DAME ADELUZ

A game of forfeits let us play, my lords.

KARL

And woe to thee, sweet lady, if thou lose!
For if thou dost, by heaven, I'll claim the forfeit
Although it be at night and in thy chamber.

DAME ADELUZ

If it were not for my stout lock, Sir Karl!

KARL

I have a pick-lock in my pocket safe.

A GIRL

Let's play "hunt the slipper"!

SCHLUCK

You see, m'lady, I don't care what we play. Only, I'd be so pleased if I might just take off these here skirts. You see, I c'n hardly play thisa way. I'm just like a bag.

[*He hastens out.*

ANOTHER GIRL

Oh, let's guess riddles!

A THIRD GIRL

No! Blind Man's Buff!

KARL

Ay, let us play that game! Come, bind my eyes!
I, an old huntsman, soon to be death's prey,
With fevered heat upon the trail of bliss,
Was never more than the blind fool of fate!
Bind fast, sweet linnet!

[MALMSTEIN *enters.*

MALMSTEIN

O my gracious lord!

JON RAND

Welcome here, Malmstein! Swiftly give us news!
How stalks the clumsy bruin in his cage?

MALMSTEIN

Dangerously does his courage rise, my lord!
I am not equal to it! Through the halls
He runs and rages, cursing mightily
Both thee and Karl, and me and everyone.
And now and then infernal ire o'ertakes him.
Then will he spit on damask draperies,
Rip them asunder with a hunting-knife
Which, more's the pity, at his girdle hangs,

Tear the upholstery, crash with his feet
The very precious chairs of ebony,
Not otherwise than wildest tyrants use.

[*A* Serving-man *hastens by with a pitcher and runs into* Jon Rand.

Jon Rand

Fellow, what means this? Look unto thy steps!

Serving-Man

Out of my way! I am in greatest haste!

Jon Rand

How, scoundrel? What is it thou saidst to me?

Serving-Man

A very proper answer at this time.

Karl

Knowest thou to whom thou speakest?

Serving-Man

'Tis all one!
It is my lord who sends me — that is all!
Out of my way! I am on duty bound. [*Exit.*

Jon Rand

It is "my lord" who sends him! There we are!

Karl

A pretty kettle o' fish!

Jon Rand

'Tis well! Right well!
I am dethroned. A Merry Andrew rules.
His rule will prosper. Very soon, instead

Of a base harlequin's wooden flail, he'll flourish
The bloody knout! Karl, it is highest time
That we protect our backs! Thinkest thou not so?
If thou wilt not play Providence again
And from our sheepfold conjure me this wolf,
He'll press us to the wall so cruelly
That we'll recall this jest through all our days.

JAU

[*Still invisible.*] Doctor! Steward! Ye dam' critturs, what's become o' ye?

MALMSTEIN

Whether henceforth without a nose-ring we
Can dare to let the fellow go, remains
To be considered. Yonder oaf did run
So swiftly on his way for a good cause,
A weighty cause, as I can witness bear.
Jau hurled a glass of Tokay 'gainst the wall
And yelled for whiskey. Yonder knave approached,
And when with smiling courtesy he declared,
That whiskey in our cellar was not stored,—
Hi! Thwackings of the rod flew right and left,
So that the serving-man in deadly haste,
Well comprehending his Serenity's wish,
Taking a pitcher, took unto his heels
Toward a pot-house. Treated brutally,
His cowardly vexation here broke forth,
And lily-livered rage.

JAU

[*Appears.*] Doctor! You ol' tick! Where are ye? I want a bit o' powder. I feel rotten! That there woman made me feel rotten.

KARL

"To serve a lord's to serve a fool!" Bend backs!
"To serve a fool's to serve a lord!" All's one!
Often I've bowed in reverence enforced
To draper's, tailor's, cobbler's, hatter's ware,
And truly it was costlier than to-day.

JAU

[*Stumbles on the threshold, laughs, turns, sees the threshold and then laughs again.* HADIT *follows him.*] Hop! Wha's that? What was that? Don't let that there happen again! Lil' man, look at that there step! A fiddler lies buried there! Mebbe you don't believe me!

KARL

My lord, the joy o'er your recovery
Is without bounds. From all directions fly
The messengers. Like to a conflagration
The news roars through the land. The bells proclaim it
From the high towers. And as the air in Summer
Over the heated mould mounts quivering
So throbs it now with prayers of gratitude.
The people rejoice: their songs of praise resound!
And all your capital streams hither as though
Bound upon pilgrimage! Forgive us, then,
If in your very castle on this day
The mad delight threatens to overflow.

JAU

An' ain't you noticed yet that I've come in here? Will I have to beat your backs crooked, eh? Well, how long are ye goin' to wait? Wha's that? On your bellies you gotta lie — creepin'! That's the

way! Creepin'! [*He beckons to* JON RAND *to kiss his heel.*] Well, how about it? Will you or won't you?

JON RAND

'Tis not the custom of this land, your Highness!
Even the king who is our lord supreme
Demands no abject kissing of his heel.

JAU

[*Regards* JON *and utters a brief, harsh laugh.*] Ratsbane an' porridge! What did he say? What kinda talk did he undertake to talk? How? Wha'? Did he say anythin'? You c'n say "king" till you're blue in the face an' it ain't no more'n if you'd say any ol' thing! The king c'n lick my boots.— I'm the king an' there ain't no other! When I wants a thing, it's gotta be done an' no whinin'! When my belly grunts you all gotta come runnin' as if the house was on fire! If I sneeze you gotta wet your breeches out of fright! If I belch all the bell ringers in the villages has to pull the bells till they're outa breath exackly as if twenty bishops had been prayin' for three hours! — Wine! Beer! I wanta mix my drinks! Run, run, dam' you, or I'll learn you to! Runnin' an' hoppin' is what ye'll have to do! Cheese! If I says cheese, the whole house has to stink with it! Understan'? [*Scarcely suppressed laughter shakes the company.*] Wha'? Are ye movin' your lips? Are ye wagglin' your ears? I'll stamp you to mud! I'll twist your throats like pigeons! I'll have ye drowned like a litter o' kittens! By Gawd! I'm ongracious! That's the word! Dam' ongracious! — Boy, hurry here an' wipe my nose.

Hurry an' do it right or I'll come after you! King! What's the king aroun' here, eh? He c'n black my boots, that's what! I'll give him three pennies for't! There's more power in my lil' toe'n in the whole dam' king! With that there goitre here on my neck I c'n do more in a measly three weeks 'n the king in three years. I c'n let it grow an' the moon'll grow, an' I let it git smaller an' the moon'll git smaller in the sky! That's what I c'n do — like nothin'! C'n the king change the weather? Well, I c'n do it! I says: snow! an' it snows! Rain! an' it rains! I tell the sun to rise an' it rises: I tell the hail to strike the wheat an' the hail goes an' strikes it. King! My ol' boot is a king, too! Here, doctor, you tell me on your conscience — I been turnin' it all over in my head — how did I git to marry that there wench?

JON RAND

A wench, most noble lord? I scarcely know. . . .

JAU

Doctor, that there wench has got to be made away with! Go an' gather the bit o' sense you have an' brew me a little drink like. Afterward you c'n eat outa golden spoons s'long 's you live. I'll see to that, all right. I don't git nothin' outa all my money. All over the country they're havin' a good time; you people here waste my money an' fill your bellies an' I pays! What's the good of it all to me, eh? First of all I gotta git rid o' this wench. I won't tell no tales. A lil' drink like, doctor, an' that'll be all right!

JON RAND

Naught easier, lord, than that! Let me take care!
But how if later you should rue the deed,
And at my hands demand your spouse's life
Which no one can return to you again.

JAU

Doctor, feel your head! No one ain't thinkin' o' that! It most stops a man's breath here. [*He observes* DAME ADELUZ, *and approaches her at once.*] Madam wife, you're purty! You're purty, Madam wife!

DAME ADELUZ

Does your Serenity deign to notice me?
Ah, then permit me in humility,
As your most patient and submissive hand-maid
Soft to caress your dear, paternal hand
And kiss your fingers. May I not?

[*She surreptitiously takes the hunting-knife from his belt and hands it, behind her back, to* KARL *who hides it.*

JAU

[*Archly flirtatious.*] Madam wife! Madam wife, I'm mighty well affectionated! You c'n be sure o' that, Madam wife! You got my favour, all right. You c'n give me a kiss! My favour is right here. An' I don't care if you go an' give me a kiss on the mouth, or twenty or thirty or forty or fifty. My favour'll be pleased. From head to foot, as many as you please. [*To* JON RAND.] Turn the corner, doctor, an' be quick about it.—Here, come over here, Madam wife, an' take my arm. We'll be so gracious, that we will, an' take

a walk through the yard. You're purty, Madam wife, we'll git married. You got your mouth fulla teeth. An' the rest, too. . . . A man c'n see what he's gittin'. A man c'n have the graciousness. D'you like sausage?

DAME ADELUZ

Your Highness, what great honour and delight!

JAU

D'you like meat? An' sausage-soup? An' d'you like fresh liver-sausage? I axes you.

DAME ADELUZ

My gracious lord, I know it is not seemly
That widows young or comely maids and women
Chatter of food before a handsome man.
But though you scold me, on my honour, sire,
I'd give my life for liver-sausage straight.
And when I think of roasts, then does the water
Run in my mouth! But sausage-soup, indeed,
Passes the highest point of human bliss.

JAU

Doctor, git outa here! Steward, git out! It's beginnin' to grow light inside o' me again! A well man c'n see a spook sometimes. Madam wife, we belong together. We got the same tastes. Let the butcher come an' stick a pig this minit. Stick the hog an' git the bristles off in a hurry so's we c'n eat sausage soup!

KARL

Do you desire the whole hog on the spit?

JAU

I don't give a dam'! Crisp is what it has to be, eh, Madam wife? That's the main thing, ain't it? Very crisp. A hog has gotta be crisp, or I don't want none of it. Will you drink somethin', Madam wife? A drop o' whiskey or so?

DAME ADELUZ

I am addicted unto temperance
In drinking, sire. Yet of champagne, if possible,
A little glass or two delights me much.

JAU

Champagne here, steward! You see, Madam wife, I don't has to do more'n wave my hand. Now there's some sense in havin' all this here! Madam wife, you c'n stuff all you want to — sausage an' ham, pretzels an' apples an' nuts an' roast veal an' cake an' everythin' together. That's the way I like you, Madam wife!

DAME ADELUZ

Sparrows, my lord, to me are hearty eaters!
Men say that I am nourished by the air
And by the adoration of my prince.

JAU

Purty is what you are, Madam wife! Appetisin' is what you are.

DAME ADELUZ

My lord, my husband died but recently . . .

JAU

That don't matter! That's all right! We'll let him have his rest, Madam wife! He got

through with his troubles. Let him lie! Let him lie! He had his share! The dead ain't goin' to come back an' we all has to die! Don't you go cryin', little miss, 'cause your husband he's in his grave. He ain't goin' to come back no more. The dead is dead, as the sayin' is. Now look at me! I'm somethin' of a man! I'm a prince. I got money like dung! That there man's dead an' I'm alive. I'm alive an' my pockets is fulla ducats. I'm rich, Madam wife. Everythin' in the world is mine, Madam wife — the trees an' the houses an' everythin' together — the wheat an' the beets, the potatoes, the cows, chickens, goats, sparrows, mice, frogs, pigeons, geese, the tiles on the roofs an' the bugs an' feathers in the beds an' every dam' thing! Don't you believe me? Mebbe you're ticklish, Madam wife?

DAME ADELUZ

I'm ticklish in the point of honour, sir!

JAU

Honour? Point? Ticklish? What I want has gotta be done an' there ain't no use talkin'! D'you want me to go on for hours like an ol' male-pigeon sittin' on a water-pipe? Or like an ol' goat! I'm a handsome man, an' I'm a clean man — clean all over! An' when I have the affectionateness, Madam wife, then I have it; then I take the liberty; then I give my favour! What's all this here? You don't know how to hold yourselves! You don't know how to behave! That's it! [*He sees* SCHLUCK *who, dressed in his everyday clothes, presses timidly against the wall.*] What kind of a man is that standin' there?

DAME ADELUZ

Where, gracious lord?

JON RAND

Where does your Highness look?

JAU

That there man . . . that there woman . . . that there man standin' there!

JON RAND

Your Highness' pardon, but you are gazing still
But at an empty spot upon the wall.

JAU

Doctor, you're drunk, ain't you?

SCHLUCK

[*Timidly to* KARL.] If you please, don't take it amiss, sir. . . .

KARL

Beggarly wretch, how didst thou come in here?

SCHLUCK

If you'll just forgive me, my dear sir. I see you don't need me no more.

KARL

And did I ever need thee, thou poor wight?
Except, perchance, to fill a prison with!
'Tis possible! There was no other need.

SCHLUCK

I'm Schluck, if you want me to be quite honest,

sir. Mebbe you don't remember me at all no more, sir?

JAU

Doctor, what kinda man is that the steward is talkin' to?

JON RAND

What man, my lord? I see no man at all!

JAU

Doctor! Yonder . . . doctor! That one . . . there! Doctor! There's a man standin'! Help, doctor! I'm dreamin'! Doctor! Mother! There's a man . . . Schluck!

SCHLUCK

Don't take it amiss, my dear sir. . . .

KARL

He smells a rat and follows on the scent.

SCHLUCK

Oh, m'lady; my dear lady! My dear sir!

[*Trembling and wide-eyed with rage and fear* JAU *goes toward* SCHLUCK.

KARL

Run, thou poor starveling, now — run swiftly away!

SCHLUCK

I beg o' you, m'lady, put in a good word for me, will you, m'lady? You see, I didn't mean to do none o' this o' my own will.

[*He flees and* JAU *follows him with sombre determination.*

JAU

If I git you, it'll be all over with you!

SCHLUCK

[*Fleeing and hiding behind one person after another.*] Good-bye, m'lady! Thank you for all your goodness to me, m'lady! An' if you'll just have the great kindness, my dear sir — I left a bag full of ol' things lyin' in the servants' room — clothes an' some very rare things, too, some mighty artistic things like! Mebbe you could go an' pick out some o' them. I'd let you have 'em cheap. The rest, you see, you c'n send after me. I'll be sittin' in the pub acrost the way.

[*The* SERVING-MAN *whom* JAU *sent for whiskey comes in and, as he opens the door,* SCHLUCK *slips out.*

JAU

I'll kill you! I'll stick a knife into you, you nightmare!

[*During the pursuit excitement awakens in the attendants. They laugh and take part in it. The girls have barred* JAU'S *way and protected and hidden* SCHLUCK. *His escape is greeted by universal laughter. The girls then form a circle about* JAU *who stands still, with closed eyes, rubbing his forehead in dumb consternation. The girls sing.*

JON RAND

Give him a sleeping-draught! Make an end, my friends!
That man or beast, interpreting his dreams,

Who loses the key unto his world of dreams,
Stands naked in the frosty depths of space
At his familiar door in utter pain.

KARL

Come, put an end to it, Dame Adeluz.

DAME ADELUZ

[*Making her way through the rows with a beaker in her hand.*

Ah, drink, dear lord, the wine that you commanded,
The leech's drink incomparably healing!
Drink and recover! Drink unto your health.

JAU

[*Drinks. Slowly he sinks down and, half-asleep, supported by the girls, mutters.*

A flower! A blue flower! Caraway cheese an' covers
O' silk. Ay, silken covers, lovely, silken,
Beautiful silken covers an' fine garments!
A hogshead cheese! An' don't the maid sing clear?
She sings exackly like a golden cloud.
She sings as maids sing at the pig-stickin'.
I am very well. Damnable scarecrow you,
That's sittin' on a sausage an' screams out:
I am a prince, a prince, a prince, a prince!
A silken riband! I'll devour it straight!
Schluck! What's that? Feed thy fill! The whiskey's good.
Come on, we'll go to bed, my kitten, come!
There we'll be fine an' warm. The meat is good.
The meat with salt an' with beet-sugar syrup.
Eh, it's a lovely little bird that sings. . . .
What is the song it sings? I don't believe it.

Pig-stickin'! Stars! An' cracknels all around.
I am a prince, a prince! I am a king!
I make the sun to rise at my desire.
A keg o' brandy! Good Lord! but it's big —
An' at it sip a thousand butterflies.

THE GREEN LAWN IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE GATE

The lawn in front of the castle-gate as in the first scene. JAU *lies asleep under an old beech-tree with scanty foliage. Within the court-yard stands a* HUNTSMAN *who awakens the sleepers with a curved horn and thereupon partly speaks and partly sings the following verses:*

Up, huntsmen, on your ways!
We will ride to the wood on a merry chase!
Oh, we would hunt and dare —
The sparrow-hawk shall swoop down on the hare.

We would go forth with the hounds untiring,
Princes and friends, watch here!
Their baying will be like church bells' choiring
To every hunter's ear!

[SCHLUCK *appears, shivering with cold. He is about to pass* JAU *by.*

JAU

One peppermint lozenge! Two peppermint lozenges! Smuggle! Le's do some smugglin'!

SCHLUCK

Jau, is it you yourself? There he lays! O

Lordy, Lord, look at him! Come now, git up! What's the matter? I been lookin' for you all aroun'! I thought mebbe they'd put you in gaol!

JAU

Wha's that, steward? Wha'? Eh? I open my mouth an' the moon shines down an' cleans out my gullet!

SCHLUCK

O Jau, you're adreamin'! Wake up!

JAU

[*Sits up.*] Let them people stay where they belong! I ain't no plaster saint! The dam' fools don't need to come pilgrimagering aroun' me! I want my rest! Main thing is . . .

SCHLUCK

Well, what's the main thing?

JAU

That that there wench is killed and buried! A woman with a beard! Ugh!

SCHLUCK

What kinda' talk are you talkin' anyhow?

JAU

Bah! I know what I'm talkin'! Mebbe you don't know what you're sayin'!

SCHLUCK

How long is we to sit here, Jau? You gotta come to your senses! You! Jau! Wake up now! I gotta take you home. D'you hear?

What c'n I say about the woman when I come home?

JAU

She's gone for good. She ain't comin' back no more.

SCHLUCK

Who's gone for good? I mean myself!

JAU

My wife's gone, I says! Anybody c'n hear it that wants to. That's all!

SCHLUCK

For Gawd's sake! Nobody never heard o' nothin' like that! You come along home an' you'll feel the drubbin' we'll both be gittin'. Then you'll find out that she's alive!

JAU

Schluck! Schluck! Schluck! Where is we anyhow?

SCHLUCK

Where d'you think we is? We're lyin' in a ditch! An' we spent every penny for booze! We ain't got nothin'! Nothin'!

JAU

Are you there again, nightmare?

SCHLUCK

Now, lil' brother, don't be mad at me. But I'm Schluck! You know me! Ain't we friends? Ain't we relations like? You rocked me in my cradle. You're bound to know that I'm Schluck.

JAU

Friends, eh? Relations, eh? I'm a prince an' you're a dam' beggar! A dam' beggar — that's what! Boy, come here an' wipe my nose!

SCHLUCK

There ain't no boy here, for Gawd's sake! How should there be a boy here? I don't mind wipin' your nose for you! But stop your nonsense!

JAU

I wanta go to my bed now, that's what! Pat the pillows straight! Smooth my bed. . . .

SCHLUCK

I'm willin'! I'm even willin' to make your bed. If only you'll go an' git up an' come away.

JAU

Pour some champagne into a glass for me.

SCHLUCK

If I had some I'd be pleased to.

JAU

Champagne! D'you hear?

SCHLUCK

Jau, I'll tell you, you musta been dreamin'. An' mebbe you had reel bad dreams.

JAU

[*Commands.*] Sit down! Git up! Jump! Spit!

SCHLUCK

[*Who obeys these commands.*] I'm willin'!

I'm willin' to do anythin' you says. I'm fond o' you; I'm willin'.

JAU

Fond or not! I'm a prince! Eh? D'you believe that or not?

SCHLUCK

Well o' course, lil' brother! O' course, I believe you.

JAU

No, you gotta believe it reely — that's what.

SCHLUCK

Reely an' reely! On my honour an' conscience.

JAU

That I'm a prince? That that there is my castle?

SCHLUCK

Well, why not? [*The bugles blow in the courtyard.*] Now they're blowin'! They're blowin' again! Come away or we'll be havin' to go to gaol again!

JAU

I'll bring you to your senses. I axes you for the last time: Am I a prince or ain't I? Or d'you wants me to beat it into you?

SCHLUCK

Well, o' course! O' course! I'm tellin' you. I been tellin' you over an' over! If you'll only come away from this here place! You see they're

comin'! They're comin' now! You ain't grown fast here!

JAU

Who's comin'?

SCHLUCK

The prince!

JAU

Watch out now!

[*There is a stirring in the courtyard. Signals are blown. The* HUNTSMEN *open the great gates.* JON RAND *and* KARL *step forth upon the lawn while the procession of hunters falls into line behind them.*

JON RAND

O sleeping forests! Soon I waken you
With the clear bugle's call. I feel thy draught,
Balsamic morning, steal into my blood,
Morning that daily, spite my whitening hair,
Fills me anew with youth. In every morn
Is youth; and in its golden, dawning hours
Remembered songs of all our blessed tides
Blend with hope's music fresh: in unison,
Triumphant soars the song of life itself,
Of all that was and is and yet shall be
In us, about us — all returns to us
In echo. Is it not so in truth?

DAME ADELUZ

Good-morrow!

JON RAND

Take these! I had thee summoned, Adeluz!

They are the loveliest pearls in all my treasures.
My sister who died young, in other days,
Wore them on her white throat. Lay them upon
Her bed — a morning greeting.

DAME ADELUZ

Ay, my lord.

JON RAND

Is she asleep? Surely she is! Or wakes?

DAME ADELUZ

She sleeps! I let her sleep, for well I know
That I would lose the favour of your Grace,
Were I to be so cruel as to wake her.
She plucked a length of vine and carried it
With her to bed. The maiden's fragrant breath
Maketh to whirl the sunbeam's many motes
Above her face — for the dear light of heaven
Can scarcely take its fill of gazing at her,
And Autumn sends its latest peacock's eye
With shadow wavering on her snowy hand
That rests upon the coverlet. It flutters,
Alights upon the spun gold of her hair,
Flicks to and fro its little gossamer wings,
Adorning her like to a living gem!
Ah, if you saw her thus! . . . But do not see
her. . . .

JON RAND

Forward! Forward, my lords and gentlemen!
Let us fare forward with a huntsman's hail!
[*He becomes aware of* SCHLUCK *and* JAU.
Hold, what is this?

KARL

An instance, so it please thee,
Of earthly Fortune's transitoriness!
The mighty Macedonian Alexander's
Descendants in a few brief years became
Scriveners and carpenters at Rome. This bundle
Of thrice-patched fustian stalked upon earth's stage
But yesterday a king.

JON RAND

It is enough!
And far more than enough! The selfsame beast
Deep in the selfsame slough! Oh, my gorge rises!
The past is past. To-day shall be to-day.

[*At a signal of the bugle the procession begins to move.*

JON RAND

[*Stopping before* SCHLUCK *and* JAU.
What seek ye here to-day?

MALMSTEIN

A chance to pilfer!
Nothing more, I'll be bound!

JON RAND

Then we must spoil
Their appetite or ere they do the deed.
Would ye lie on hard planks, my men, ere night,
With bread and water, for two days or three?

JAU

Turn aroun'! We ain't goin' huntin' to-day!
Turn aroun' an' back I says! Understan'?

JON RAND

Why should we not, thou most peculiar wight?
Is it thy place thus to command us? Eh?
[*To* SCHLUCK.
What is thy name?

SCHLUCK

Schluck!

JON RAND

Well, my excellent Schluck:
Is that boon-fellow of thine often so strange?
What would he have of us? Declare it straight!

KARL

Schluck! This is Schluck! By heaven, my gracious lord,
By a hair's breadth I had not known him at all.
Art thou not he whom our most merry maids
Tricked out so gaily with both shift and skirt,
And who so artfully at our late feast
Acted the part o' the queen?

SCHLUCK

Ay, my good lord.

JON RAND

[*Throws a purse to him.*
Is it he? Then I indeed am in his debt.
Thou didst it gracefully; here's thy reward.
But thou? [*To* JAU.] Why starest thou so wildly up,
Giving us names that do not us befit,
Crying, commanding in unseemly wise?

JAU

Turn aroun', I tell ye! I ain't goin' a-huntin' to-day! I ain't goin', doctor! I don't care how dam' much you stares your eyes outa your head! Turn aroun'! Git back! I ain't goin'!

[*The* HUNTSMEN *laugh.*

MALMSTEIN

This may well be, good fellow, and we all,
Upon mine honour, doubt no whit thereof —
Unless thou go a-hunting with mousetraps,
With insect powder and with rough-on-rats
In kitchen low or attic under sky.

[*The* HUNTSMEN *laugh again.*

JAU

Turn aroun', steward! Wha'? Laughin' at me? Are ye goin' to laugh at a prince?

MALMSTEIN

The hoax is on thy part and not on ours!
Thou art bereft of sense, fellow, or else
Thou wouldst not in the presence of our lord
Bear thyself half so impudently. Schluck,
Canst thou not make him fathom who we are?

JAU

Doctor! Doctor! You! Look me in the face, will you?

SCHLUCK

Jau! Jau! For Gawd's sake, listen to me! — My friend is sick, sir, on my honour an' conscience! What has gotten into you, Jau?

JON RAND

Then tell us clear what thou hast dreamed, my man!
My huntsmen here tell me that thou art Jau,
A clever fellow but not overmuch
To industry inclined. Art thou not Jau?
Thinkest thou thou art I? Wert thou in dreams
Perchance a prince? Then look about thee, look
Upon thee! In such garments walked about
Never yet a prince, so long as princes are.
Go home, and if at any time there stir
Desire of work within thee, take thy case
Unto our bailiff, and at my command
A cow he'll give thee and a patch of ground
Where thou mayest burrow to thy heart's content,
No prince assuredly, but thy own master. . . .
The pack is growing hoarse! A huntsman's hail!

[*The procession moves and a* HUNTSMAN *sings.*

Up the woods we go!
Hark to the horns that blow!
The beaters gather all around
And sing their merry morning song
Unto the bugle's sound.

THE HUNTSMEN

[*Repeat to the music of the bugles.*

Out to the woods we go!
Hark to the horns that blow!

[JON RAND *and the procession pass beyond view.* KARL *remains behind. The music of the hunting-horns grows softer and finally dies away in the distance.* JAU *stands in deep consternation, shaking his head from time to time.* KARL *pats his shoulder consolingly.*

JAU

[*With a start of terror.*] Ay, ay, tha's right. These ain't nothin' but ol' patched rags!

KARL

Be thou content, my man! Thou hast but dreamed.
Yet I, even as thou seest me, and the prince
And all his huntsmen and his serving-men —
We dream! And to each one the moment comes,
Seven times upon each day, in which he says:
Thou wakest now and hitherto hast dreamed!
There! Take gold! And console thyself. I am
At bottom just as poor a wight as thou.
And when thou, gnashing, o'er thy brandy laugh'st,
Then is thy laughter much akin to that
Which I, a prince's parasite, must laugh
At my lord's table oft. Drink and imagine
That through thy dream there swam a leaking keg
That rained on thee drops of sweet muskadine.
Remember that with ever new delight,
But stretch not forth thine hands to pluck the clouds. [*Exit.*

[*A Pause.*]

JAU

So I just dreamed that there business! Well, well, well, well! You don't say! Well, I'll be damned! All right then! Things is as they is! How! Tell me this: Ain't I as good as him? He's got a good stomack! I got one, too. Better mebbe'n his. He's got two eyes. All right. I ain't blind, neither. Has he got four stomacks or six eyes? I sleep all right; I c'n drink my whiskey. I c'n draw my breath as good as him! What? Ain't I right? If he's got anythin'

more'n me, it ain't worth havin'! You hit him a bang in his jaw, Schluck, an' then do the same to me — an' his teeth fly out same's mine! You feel that head o' yours, you, with your fine oiled hair — the same head what you got your fine lil' velvet cap on now! Feel it, I says! The worms'll eat it in the end! They'll eat it, same's they will mine! I know! I know that! I ain't a fool! It all comes to the same thing! You can't make a fool o' me.

SCHLUCK

But we got money.

JAU

Come, lil' brother, come! We'll be goin' over to the pub. An' there I'll tell you about a adventure. . . .

SCHLUCK

Me too!

JAU

About a adventure that'll make you open your eyes an' your mouth.

SCHLUCK

Me too! Me too!

JAU

Just as I'm sayin'! Your eyes an' your mouth! I'm wise now! I know all about it. You c'n believe me! I knows! I sit in the pub — an' I sit in the castle!

SCHLUCK

I was in a castle too.

JAU

Don't you believe it? I lay at home on a bench an' I dreamed that I'm ridin' a-huntin'! I c'n fill my belly with sour beer an' yet be soakin' myself in shinin' champagne! I tell you I know. I'm a prince an' I'm Jau too. Wha'? Ain't I right?

SCHLUCK

The devil! I gotta think a bit first. . . .

JAU

I tell you, I know, Schluck! I'm a prince an' I'm Jau too. Come, lil' brother. Even if I'm a prince, we'll go over to the inn now an' sit down with plain people an' I'll be reel condescending, reel friendly like!

SCHLUCK

Well, well, well, well, you are a devil of a fellow!

AND PIPPA DANCES

A LEGEND OF THE GLASSWORKS

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

TAGLIAZONI, *an Italian expert glass-blower.*
PIPPA, *his daughter.*
THE MANAGER OF THE GLASS-FACTORY.
OLD HUHN, *a former glass-blower.*
MICHEL HELLRIEGEL, *a travelling journeyman.*
WANN, *a mythological character.*
WENDE, *landlord in the tavern in the Redbrook Gorge.*
THE BARMAID *in the tavern.*
ANTON, SCHÄDLER, } *master glass-blowers.*
FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH LUMBERMAN.
JONATHAN, WANN'S *dumb servant.*
GLASS-BLOWERS *and* PAINTERS; *guests at the tavern.*
AN OCARINA PLAYER, *with a goitre.*

The scene is laid in the Silesian mountains in winter.

THE FIRST ACT

The public-room in old WENDE'S *tavern in Redbrook Gorge. At the right and in the background doors leading out into the entrance hall. In the corner to the right, the tile stove; to the left, the bar. Small windows, wall benches, dark timbered ceiling. To the left, three tables, occupied. The first, by the bar, is occupied by lumbermen. They are drinking gin and beer and smoking pipes. Around the second table, more toward the front, are sitting better-dressed people, the glass-painters* SCHÄDLER *and* ANTON, *several others and an Italian about fifty years old,* TAGLIAZONI *by name, who has the look of a desperado. They are playing cards. At the front table the* MANAGER *of the glass-factory has taken his seat, a man well along in the forties, with a small head. He is slender and dashing in appearance. He wears top-boots, leather breeches and a riding-jacket. Before him stands half a bottle of champagne and a thin wineglass, filled. Beside it on the table lies a riding-whip. It is after twelve on a cold winter night. A few lamps shed a scant light. Through the window moonlight falls into the smoky room. The old innkeeper* WENDE *and a rustic barmaid are serving.*

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WENDE

[*Grey-haired, with serious, impassive expression.*] Another half bottle, sir?

MANAGER

What are you thinking of? A whole one! Did the mare get a good rubbing down?

WENDE

I looked after it myself. Such an animal deserves it. It looked like a white horse, it was so covered with foam.

MANAGER

It was a stiff ride!

WENDE

A magnificent horse!

MANAGER

It is a blooded horse! It was sometimes up to its belly in the snow, but it always went through.

WENDE

[*Slightly ironically.*] You're a faithful old customer, sir.

MANAGER

[*Drums on the table, laughs gaily.*] Really rather peculiar, isn't it? January, a two hours' ride through the woods, old fellow — amusing devotion! Are my trout on the way?

WENDE

Good things take time.

MANAGER

Well, well, don't get disagreeable! Is it my fault that you are staying here in this forsaken, half Bohemian, half German den of thieves, Wende?

WENDE

Not that, sir. But it will be if I have to get out.

MANAGER

You old cross-patch, keep still!

WENDE

Just look out of the window.

MANAGER

I know, the dilapidated old rival factory. It will soon be pulled down, just so that you won't be always talking about it. What are you complaining about, anyway? Things are going very well. They come here from three or four hours' distance and leave their money behind — heaps of it.

WENDE

How long will these doings last, pray tell? When the factory next door here ran its two furnaces, one could earn one's bread quietly and surely. Now one is dependent on rowdyism.

MANAGER

Oh, you crank! Just see to it that I get my wine!

[WENDE *goes away shrugging his shoulders. At the card-table an altercation has arisen.*

TAGLIAZONI

[*Angrily.*] *No, signore, no, signore! Impossibile!* I've put down a gold piece. *No, signore!* You are mistaken, signore. . . .

SCHÄDLER

Stop! Them is damned lies!

TAGLIAZONI

No, signore! I swear *per Bacco! Ladri! Ladri! assassiniti ammazzo!*

ANTON

[*To* SCHÄDLER.] Why, there lays your money!

SCHÄDLER

[*Discovers the missing gold piece.*] That was a lucky thing for you, you damned varmint.

MANAGER

[*To the card-players.*] Well, you lazy dogs, when are you going to quit?

ANTON

When you go home, sir.

MANAGER

Then you can run along behind the nag. By that time you will have gambled away the shirts from your backs.

ANTON

Well, just wait and see, sir!

MANAGER

That's what comes of the count's letting you

have such a sinful lot of money. I'll have to reduce your wages. The more you earn, the more you squander.

ANTON

The count earns money, the manager earns money, the painters ain't agoin' to starve to death nuther.

TAGLIAZONI

[*Has shuffled the cards, begins a new game. Beside each player are lying actual heaps of gold.*] *Basta! incominciamo adesso.*

MANAGER

Dove è vostra figlia oggi.

TAGLIAZONI

Dorme, signore! è ora mi pare.

MANAGER

Altro che!

[*He is silent, giving signs of slight embarrassment. In the meantime* WENDE *himself sets the trout down before him, and directs the* BARMAID, *who at the same time brings in the bottle of champagne and the potatoes.*

MANAGER

[*With a sigh.*] It is horribly tiresome at your place to-day, Wende; one spends one's money and gets nothing for it.

WENDE

[*Who is assiduously intent on serving his guest,*

pauses and says rudely.] Then go somewhere else in future.

MANAGER

[*Turns and looks through the little window behind his back.*] Who is coming there tinkling over the snow? It sounds as if he were trampling on broken glass.

WENDE

There's enough broken glass around the old glass shanty.

MANAGER

A gigantic shadow! Who is that, anyway?

WENDE

[*Breathes against the window.*] It must be the old glass-blower Huhn. One of the ghosts of the old glass-factory, that can neither live nor die. Now that you have ruined the business with your factory at Sophienau, why don't you go on with it as a branch?

MANAGER

Because it would bring in nothing and would cost like the devil. [*Continuing to look through the window.*] Eighteen degrees! Clear! bright as in broad daylight! the starry sky is enough to drive one mad! blue! everything blue! [*He turns to his plate.*] Even the trout — Lord! how the beasts do open their snouts!

[*A gigantic man with long red hair, red bushy eyebrows and red beard, covered from head to foot with rags, enters. He*

takes off his wooden pattens, stands with watery, red-rimmed eyes, opening and shutting his moist swollen lips, and growling.

MANAGER

[*Eating the trout, visibly without appetite.*] Old Huhn! He is grumbling something to himself. Get a stiff grog for Old Huhn, Wende! — Well, what have you got your eye on me for?

[OLD HUHN, *still murmuring and glaring at the* MANAGER, *has shuffled over behind an empty table by the right wall, between the stove and the door.*

FIRST LUMBERMAN

He won't believe that there ain't no work no more 'ere in Redbrook Gorge.

SECOND LUMBERMAN

You're meanin' 'e comes sometimes at night an' goes spookin' around alone over there.

FIRST LUMBERMAN

Then 'e makes 'isself a fire in the empty furnace, an' stan's before 'is ol' furnace hole and blows tremendjus glass balls.

SECOND LUMBERMAN

'S lungs is like bellows. I know! No 'un else c'd keep up with 'im.

THIRD LUMBERMAN

Well, Huhn, how's ol' Jacob? That's the way it is: 'e never talks to no human bein', but 'e 'as

an ol' jackdaw to home, and 'e talks to 'im all day long.

MANAGER

Why is the fellow idle? Why doesn't he come to us? He could get work, you know, in Sophienau!

FIRST LUMBERMAN

That's too far out in the great world for 'im.

MANAGER

When one looks at that old man, and thinks of Paris, one doesn't believe that such a place as Paris exists!

WENDE

[*Modestly takes a seat at the* MANAGER'S *table.*] Have you been in Paris again?

MANAGER

Just back three days ago. Raked in tremendous orders!

WENDE

Well, that was worth while.

MANAGER

Worth while! Costs money and brings in some: but more than that! Isn't it enough to make your head spin, Wende, when one comes to Paris, brightly lighted restaurants! duchesses in gold and silk and Brussels lace! the ladies from the Palais-Royal! our glasses, the finest crystal on the tables, — things that such a hairy giant as this has made! — Hang it, how it does look, when such a real

delicate hand lifts such an exquisite frost-flower up, above the bare bosom to the hot painted lips, with glowing glances! One wonders that they do not melt away before such a sinful siren's glances! — Here's to you! [*He drinks.*] Here's to you, Wende! One can hardly recognise the things that come from our factory!

BARMAID

[*Setting grog before* OLD HUHN.] Don't take hold of it! it's hot!

[OLD HUHN *takes the glass and tosses it down without further ado.*

MANAGER

[*Observing it.*] By God! did you see that?

[*The lumbermen break out into laughter.*

FIRST LUMBERMAN

Just pay for half a quart for 'im; then you can see 'im swallow live coals.

SECOND LUMBERMAN

He'll break — he'll smash a beer mug in two and swallow the pieces like sugar.

THIRD LUMBERMAN

But you jest oughta see 'im dance with the Italian girl, when blind Franz plays the ocarina.

MANAGER

Franz, bring on the ocarina! [*Calls to* TAGLIAZONI.] *Dieci lire,* if Pippa will dance.

TAGLIAZONI

[*Playing.*] *Non va. Impossibile, Signor padrone.*

MANAGER

Venti lire! trenta — !

TAGLIAZONI

No.

WENDE

She's having her beauty sleep, sir.

MANAGER

[*Undeterred, passionately.*] *Quaranta!* Let's raise the devil a bit! Slowcoaches! What does a fellow come here for, anyway? Not even a slut of a gipsy girl! I'll never set foot in this smuggler's den again! — [*Continuing his offer.*] *Cinquanta!*

TAGLIAZONI

[*Playing, obstinately, over his shoulder.*] *No! no! no! no! no! no!*

MANAGER

Cento lire!

TAGLIAZONI

[*Curtly.*] *Per cento, si!*

[*He bends over and skillfully catches a blue banknote which the* MANAGER *has thrown to him.*

MANAGER

[*With some loss of composure.*] Did my Lioness get something to eat?

BARMAID

Yes, sir, the dog has been fed.

MANAGER

[*Gruffly.*] Keep still!

BARMAID

When you ask me, I surely have to answer.

MANAGER

[*Curtly, repressedly, angrily.*] Keep still, hold your dirty mouth! — Don't smoke such asafœtida, you gang. Else how shall the child breathe here?

TAGLIAZONI

[*Has risen, calls with a rough voice from the hall door to the story above.*] Pippa! Pippa! *Vien giù, presto!* Pippa! *sempre avanti!*

MANAGER

[*Rises indignantly.*] Hold your tongue, let her sleep; you Dago scoundrel!

TAGLIAZONI

Pippa!

MANAGER

Keep your money, fellow, and let her sleep! keep your money, fellow, I don't need her!

TAGLIAZONI

Come vuole! Grazie, signore, beh!

[*With a fatalistic shrug of the shoulders he takes his place indifferently again at the card-table.*

MANAGER

Saddle, Wende! Bring the horse from the stable!

[Pippa *appears in the door; she clings sleepily and shyly to the doorpost.*

Manager

[*Observes her and says, surprised.*] Why, there she is! Oh, never mind; lie down, Pippa! Or haven't you been asleep at all? Come, wet your lips, moisten your lips. Here is something for you.

[Pippa *comes obediently to the table and takes a sip from the champagne glass.*

Manager

[*Holding up the exquisite glass from which he is drinking.*] Slender convolvulus! Slender convolvulus! From Venice, too! Is it good, little one?

Pippa

Thanks, it's sweet!

Manager

Do you want to go back to sleep?

Pippa

No.

Manager

Are you cold?

Pippa

Most always, here.

Manager

Then do stir up the fire! I am not surprised after all that you are cold, you fine delicate ten-

dril, you! Come, sit down, put my cloak around you! Why, you really were born in a glass-furnace; I dreamed that yesterday, you know.

PIPPA

Brr! I like to sit close to the glass furnace.

MANAGER

According to my dream, you like it best in the very middle. Do you see, I am a crazy fellow, an old jackass of a glass-factory manager, who dreams instead of calculating. When the white flames break from the furnace, I often see you trembling in the glowing air like a salamander. Then you melt away slowly, but not until it gets dark.

HUHN

I've had beautiful dreams of her too.

MANAGER

What is that monster growling about again?

[PIPPA *thoughtfully turns her little head around and looks at the old man, at the same time stroking with her right hand her heavy, loose, fair hair back behind her shoulders.*

HUHN

Shall we dance again, little Pippa?

MANAGER

[*Gruffly.*] Oh, no! I don't care for dancing now. [*To* PIPPA.] It is enough for me, if you are only here, you charming child!

BARMAID

[*Behind the bar to the landlord.*] Now the manager is feeling cozy again.

WENDE

Well, and what business is that of yours?

MANAGER

Tired! go to bed, poor thing! You belong in court-yards with fountains! Now you have to be in this den. Shall I take you as you are, put you on my horse and ride away with you?

[PIPPA *shakes her head slowly.*

MANAGER

Then you like it better here? Now you shake your head again. How long have you lived here, in this house?

PIPPA

[*Reflects, stares at him with wide-open eyes.*] I don't know.

MANAGER

And before you came here. Where did you live then?

PIPPA

[*Reflects, laughs at her ignorance.*] That was — why, wasn't I always here?

MANAGER

You, among dumb and talking tree-trunks?

PIPPA

Cosa?

MANAGER

In the frozen, snowy land of the Barbarians? [*To* TAGLIAZONI.] Where did you say her mother came from?

TAGLIAZONI

[*Over his shoulder.*] *Si, signore! Pieve di Cadore.*

MANAGER

Pieve di Cadore, that is on the other side of the great divide, isn't it?

TAGLIAZONI

[*Laughing.*] *Siamo parenti del divino Tiziano, signore!*

MANAGER

Well, little one, then perhaps we are related; for he looks like my uncle the forester. So you are half and half at home here too! But the wind will blow your golden hair away somewhere else.

[*A ragged little man with a goitre comes in, playing the ocarina, and plants himself down in the middle of the room. By the lumbermen who are sitting around a table smoking, and drinking gin, he is greeted with a* "Hello."

FIRST LUMBERMAN

Let Huhn dance!

SECOND LUMBERMAN

Let the little girl dance!

THIRD LUMBERMAN

If she will dance, I'll give a penny too.

FOURTH LUMBERMAN

Watch Huhn makin' faces already!

MANAGER

Nothing doing here, you clodhoppers! Do you understand me?

FIRST LUMBERMAN

You wanted it yourself, sir!

MANAGER

The deuce take me, now I don't want it.

[HUHN *draws himself up to his full height, makes a move as if he were about to come out from behind the table, and at the same time, feverishly staring, he does not take his eyes off* PIPPA.

MANAGER

Sit down, Huhn.

WENDE

[*Urgently and resolutely coming up, and seizing* HUHN'S *arm.*] Sit down! No capers! You will tramp through my floor. [*To the* OCARINA PLAYER.] Stop that infernal tootling!

[HUHN *continues his idiotic stare, without sitting down. The ocarina ceases. The players have again finished the game.* TAGLIAZONI *pockets a little pile of gold. The painter,* ANTON, *suddenly springs up and strikes his fist on the table, so that the gold-pieces roll around in the room.*

ANTON

Some'un among us is cheating.

TAGLIAZONI

Who? *io? io? dica?* Who?

ANTON

I don't say who! I jes' say some'un. There's somethin' wrong about this.

FIRST LUMBERMAN

Yes, whoever plays with the Italian has to get a bit of the black art thrown in.

SCHÄDLER

Some money is missing, a bit of money is missing.

FIRST LUMBERMAN

Jes' watch, now the lamp will go out. He'll surely have some trick up his sleeve.

MANAGER

Don't let the rogue hold the bank.

TAGLIAZONI

[*Indifferently pocketing the gold, half turning to the* MANAGER.] *Altro!* The others are rogues, *io no. Basta! Andiamo a letto!* Pippa, *avanti! vien qua.*

ANTON

What, he wants to go to bed now, when he has jes' taken our money? Stay here! We're goin' to go on playin' now!

TAGLIAZONI

E altro! Why not! I play too! *come vuole, signor mio!*

[*The* BARMAID, LANDLORD, *the* OCARINA PLAYER, *a* GLASS-PAINTER *and a* LUMBERMAN *hunt for the money on the floor.*

SECOND LUMBERMAN

[*At the table.*] Afterwards some one will say, some money's gone. I ain't agoin' to help look.

[*From the hall enters* MICHEL HELLRIEGEL, *a travelling journeyman about twenty-three years old; he has on a thin cap with a visor, a knapsack with brushes strapped on it; his coat, as well as his waistcoat and trousers are halfway respectable, but his shoes are worn out. The effects of a long fatiguing journey are to be seen in the pale, exhausted expression and movements of the young man. His face has fine, unusual, almost noble features. On his upper lip is the first soft down of his beard. In his entire appearance is a touch of the fantastic and a touch of ill health.*

BARMAID

Lord, here's a journeyman this late!

HELLRIEGEL

[*Blinking on account of the smoke, and looking out feverishly from under his long lashes, stands dazzled in the circle of light from the lamp; he turns over his cap in his hands, and tries to conceal how much his hands and feet pain him from the*

cold.] Is there a night's lodging here for a travelling journeyman?

WENDE

Why not? for money and kind words. [*Since the young man looks around and can find no empty place.*] Sit down on the gin-barrel here and count your money on the bench by the stove. If you want anything more, . . . there is room enough.

FIRST LUMBERMAN

Where are you goin' to so late, Brother Tramp?

MANAGER

To the land flowing with milk and honey!

HELLRIEGEL

[*With a humble bow, first to the* LUMBERMAN *and then to the* MANAGER.] I was going over the ridge to Bohemia.

MANAGER

What is your trade?

HELLRIEGEL

Glassmaking.

SECOND LUMBERMAN

He don't seem to me to be quite right in his upper story! In this cold weather to climb over the mountain, and here, where there is neither highway nor byway. I suppose he wants to go over to the Snowman, and perish like a dog.

WENDE

That is his business, not ours.

THIRD LUMBERMAN

You ain't from the mountains, be you? You don't know our upland winters here, do you?

[HELLRIEGEL *has listened politely and modestly. Now he hangs up his cap properly, takes off his knapsack and lays it aside with his stick; then he takes a seat on the designated gin-barrel, shivers, bites his teeth together, and passes his hand through his hair, with his fingers spread apart.*

MANAGER

If your papers are in order, why do you go over there to Bohemia? We make glass in Silesia, too.

HELLRIEGEL

[*Starts up.*] I'd like to learn something quite unusual!

MANAGER

Oh, you don't say so! What, for instance? Perhaps you expect to turn clear water into balls with your bare hands. [HELLRIEGEL *shrugs his shoulders.*] Anyway, we do that with snow here, too.

HELLRIEGEL

Snow is not water! I want to go out into the world.

MANAGER

Are you not in the world here with us?

HELLRIEGEL

I am searching for something.

MANAGER

Have you lost something?

HELLRIEGEL

No! I think something is coming to me! [*Sitting half upright and wearily leaning forward, he looks around with wide-open, astonished eyes.*] I really don't know where I am.

MANAGER

Yes, yes, so it goes. In the morning the sky full of fiddles, in the evening not a sound bone in one's body.

HELLRIEGEL

Is one — is one in Bohemia here, landlord?

FIRST LUMBERMAN

[*Laughing.*] It seems a bit Bohemian to you, don't it?

[HELLRIEGEL *has sunk back on the barrel, his arms lie extended on the bench by the stove. He puts his hands under his brow and hides his face with a secret groan.*

THIRD LUMBERMAN

He ain't been away from his mother more'n three days.

[PIPPA, *standing at the* MANAGER'S *table, has unceasingly been observing the newcomer. Now, as if in thought, she comes up to him, and sits down not far from the place where his head is lying on the bench, with her hands in her lap, her legs dangling, and her eyes obliquely directed toward him.*

MANAGER

A strange saint, isn't he, Pippa? [*Ironically humming.*]

"Whom God would special favour show
To distant lands he bids him —"

and so forth. He sings, too, when he is in his right mind. I'll bet thirteen bottles of champagne, in fact, that he has some original verses in his knapsack.

PIPPA

[*Rises involuntarily with a certain perplexity, now looking at the young man, now helplessly at the people surrounding her; suddenly she runs close to the* MANAGER.] *Padrone! Padrone!* the stranger is weeping!

MANAGER

Sweet and fine,
Is not my line!

SCHÄDLER

[*Comes from the card-table, stands in military bearing before the* MANAGER.] Sir, I am an honourable man!

MANAGER

Well, what then? Why do you tell me that now, after midnight in the Isar tavern?

SCHÄDLER

[*Wipes the cold sweat from his brow.*] I am a perfect artisan.

MANAGER

Well, what then?

SCHÄDLER

I'd like to have a loan.

MANAGER

Do you think that I always carry the safe around with me in my riding-jacket?

SCHÄDLER

A personal loan.

MANAGER

I wouldn't think of such a thing! I'll not help you to ruin yourself completely.

SCHÄDLER

The dog is fleecing us, every one of us.

MANAGER

Why do you play with him? Put the fellow out of the game!

SCHÄDLER

We most certainly are going to put him out of the game some day!

MANAGER

You have a wife and children at home.

SCHÄDLER

That we have, all of us, sir. But when once the devil is loose —

MANAGER

No, I'll not help on such madness.

[SCHADLER *shrugs his shoulders and goes to* WENDE *behind the bar. One can see that*

he is urging him to advance the money, which the latter at first refuses to do, but finally does. The journeyman drinks greedily in the meantime the hot grog, which the Barmaid *has placed on the bench. Now she brings him food and he eats.*

Manager

[*Lifts his glass to the journeyman.*] Well, you belated swallow, here's to you!

[Hellriegel *rises with the glass, politely thanking him, and sits down again.*

Manager

Cloudland is still rather far away.

Hellriegel

[*About to sit down, starts up again.*] But I have a will and perseverance!

Manager

And spit blood!

Hellriegel

A little bit does not matter.

Manager

No. If you only knew what you had a will to do. What in the world keeps you jerking so, that you are always starting up in such a surprising way?

Hellriegel

Sometimes I actually jump for impatience.

MANAGER

Like the little child in the dark room, hey, when the dear mammy behind the door is lighting the first candles on the Christmas-tree? Wait a minute, wait a minute, the chaise doesn't go so swiftly.

HELLRIEGEL

Everything must be changed.— The whole world!

MANAGER

And first of all your Worship. [*To* PIPPA.] That is one of those stupid ones found among real clever people, the kind one usually sees only in glass jars. [*To* HELLRIEGEL.] "And if you take the wings of the morning. . . ." In brief, your journey has its difficulties! [*To* PIPPA.] Galop, galop, over stick and stone. . . .

[*He tries to take her on his knee, she wards him off, looks at* HELLRIEGEL. *He starts up with a red face.*

HELLRIEGEL

I should like to be allowed to make a plain remark.

MANAGER

Does a new idea strike you?

HELLRIEGEL

Not this moment.

MANAGER

Well, perhaps it's the sky.

[MICHEL *looks at the* MANAGER *spiritlessly and forgets to sit down.* PIPPA *has*

seized a little strap and hits the Manager's *hand smartly.*

Manager

Ouch!

[Pippa *looks at* Hellriegel *and laughs; he, forgetting everything around him, fixes his eyes on hers. His lips move mutely.*

Manager

[*Puts out his hand.*] Again, Pippa! [Pippa *strikes.*] Ouch! but that was hard! All good things come in threes. Now for the third time! [*Laughing, she strikes with all her might.*] There! Now I have been taught and punished. If now a little bird falls out of the nest again, I shall at least know what to do.

[Old Huhn, *who in the meantime has sat down again, is leaning over the table with his arms outstretched. With his hairy finger he beckons* Pippa *to him. Since she neither obeys nor notices him, he rises now after having sufficiently observed the play between her, the* Manager, *and* Hellriegel, *shuffles over in front of the artisan, stares at him, lifts his long, loosely hanging gorilla-like arms and puts his hands spread out flat before the latter's breast, thus slowly pushing him back upon his barrel; then he turns, beckons slyly to* Pippa, *and raises his elbows in a peculiar fashion, reminding one of an eagle that is balancing itself on a bar in a cage. At the same time he stands up as if to invite her to the dance.*

MANAGER

What's got into your head, you old Blunderbuss?

LUMBERMEN

[*Crying out together.*] The girl must dance! The girl must dance!

BARMAID

[*Has taken a little tambourine from the shelf where the gin bottles are standing, and throws it to* PIPPA, *who catches it.*] You hussy, don't wait to be coaxed, don't put on airs; you ain't no Marchpane Princess.

[PIPPA *looks first at the* MANAGER *and then at* HELLRIEGEL *and finally with an expression of hatred, looks the giant over from head to foot. Suddenly, beginning with a start, she strikes the tambourine and glides up to* HUHN *with a dancing step, as if intending to elude him and dance past him. The ocarina begins, and the old man also begins the dance. It consists in the attempt of something clumsy and gigantic to catch something beautiful and swift; like a bear with a butterfly, which with gleaming colours flutters around him. As often as the girl eludes him, she utters a loud, bell-like laugh. Sometimes she pulls herself away by spinning around; in so doing she is enveloped in her red-gold hair. When pursued, she makes sounds like "ai" in her throat, like a childish squeak. The old man hops around as grotesquely and as ridiculously as a captured bird of prey.*

He lies in wait for her, misses her when he tries to catch her, and pants, becoming more and more excited, growling louder and louder. Pippa *dances more and more ecstatically. The* Lumbermen *have arisen. The players have interrupted their game, and watch eagerly.* Tagliazoni, *indifferent to the proceedings, makes use of the opportunity to pocket the money and make up the cards. Without noticing it, he is carefully observed during this time by* Schädler. *Now it seems as if* Pippa *can no longer escape the monster; she gives a loud scream and at this moment* Schädler *seizes* Tagliazoni *by the left wrist with both hands.*

Schädler

[*His voice heard above all the rest.*] Stop!

Tagliazoni

Cosa, Signore?

Schädler

Cozy here, cozy there! There's cheating goin' on here! Now we have the swindler in a trap!

Tagliazoni

È matto! è matto! diavolo! son fiol di Muran. Conosce la casa de' Coltelli?

Schädler

Cheese, butter nor bread nor nothin' won't help now. Anton, hold him fast there, now we'll pay

him for it! [Anton *holds* Tagliazoni's *other hand fast.*] He has been smugglin' in marked cards and these two he was keepin' himself.

[*All present crowd around the card-table, excepting* Hellriegel *and* Pippa, *who stand in the corner, pale and breathing deeply.*

Manager

Tagliazoni, what did I tell you? Don't go too far!

Tagliazoni

Let me go, or I bite you in the face!

Schädler

Spit and bite all you want, but you must give us back our money, you scamp!

All the Players

Yes, indeed, every penny, all the money!

Tagliazoni

Cazzo, I'll be hanged if I do! Cursed German beasts, you crazy, vile low beasts! What have I to do with you *Tedeschi?*

First Lumberman

Smash the old ass's skull in for him!

Second Lumberman

With a waggon pin over his head! Till it gets blue as sulphur before his eyes. That's the only way you can answer a Dago in German!

Wende

Quiet, you people, I won't have this!

Schädler

Wende, pull his cards out of his hands!

Tagliazoni

I'll murder you all together!

Anton

[*Unyielding.*] All right!

Second Lumberman

Just look at the rings on the beggar's hands!

Tagliazoni

Padrone, I call upon you to bear witness! I am being attacked treacherously. I won't make another contract! *Lavoro niente, niente più.* I'll stop work right off.— *Carabinieri!* Police! *Pazzia bestialissima!*

First Lumberman

Just keep on bellowing; there's no police here!

Second Lumberman

There ain't nothin' here but snow an' fir trees.

Tagliazoni

Chiama . . . chiamate i carabinieri! Briganti! Signore Wende! Pippa, run!

Manager

Man, I advise you, do what they say, otherwise I won't answer for the consequences.

Tagliazoni

Brutte bestie! Basta così!

[*Unexpectedly, quick as lightning,* Tagli-

AZONI *has released himself, drawn a dagger and taken refuge behind a table. The assailants are for the moment nonplussed.*

THIRD LUMBERMAN

A knife! Kill him, the dog!

ALL TOGETHER

[*As if one person.*] Now let him catch it! This is the end!

MANAGER

Don't kill Tagliazoni, I say! I need him too much in the glass-factory. Don't do things that you will regret to-morrow!

[TAGLIAZONI *now instinctively realizes the fearful danger of the moment, and flees past his assailants out of the door. The gamblers and lumbermen rush after him crying* "Down, down with him!" *The gleam of knives can be seen.*

MANAGER

I hope they're not going to kill the fellow off!

WENDE

Then they'll make me shut up shop.

BARMAID

[*Watching at the open window.*] They're goin' over the clearin' into the woods; he falls down, he gets up! They're keepin' after 'im!

MANAGER

I'll let the Danish dogs loose and scatter the gang.

WENDE

I'll not answer for anything! I'll not guarantee anything!

MANAGER

What's going on?

BARMAID

One is lyin' in the snow. The others are runnin' into the woods.

[*A fearful, heart-rending scream is heard, softened by the distance.*

WENDE

Shut the window, the lamp is going out.

[*The lamp has in fact gone out; the* BARMAID *slams the window shut.*

MANAGER

I don't like the sound of that! Come along, Wende!

WENDE

I'll not answer for anything! I'll not guarantee anything!

[*He and the* MANAGER *go off, the latter preceding.*

BARMAID

[*In her perplexity, wildly to* HELLRIEGEL.] Get up! help! help! take hold! Anyone might come here! This damned gambling! [*She has gathered the cards from the table and throws them into the stove.*] You must go, they have killed someone! He brings misfortune and will not help to straighten it out!

[Hellriegel *has sprung up, and partly of his free will, partly pulled, partly pushed by the* Barmaid, *he staggers through the hall door. Exit with* Barmaid.

[Huhn *still stands almost as he was when surprised by the breaking out of the quarrel. His eyes have slyly and restlessly followed the proceedings. Now, turning slowly around and around, he tries to penetrate the darkness, without discovering* Pippa, *who, crouching terrified, is sitting on the floor squeezed into a corner. He pulls out sulphur matches, strikes them and lights the lamp. Now he hunts again and discovers* Pippa. *Standing in the middle of the room, he beckons to her with hideous friendliness. Silently* Pippa *looks at him, like a bird which has fallen from its nest and been captured. Then he approaches her; she moans softly. The little window is pushed open from outside and the voice of the* Manager *calls in.*

Voice of the Manager

Pippa! Pippa! She can not stay here. I'll take her with me.

[*Hardly has the* Manager *left the window, when* Huhn *rushes up to the startled child, picks her up, takes her in his arms, whereupon* Pippa *with a quick sigh-like shriek, faints.*

Huhn

I have caught you at last after all!

[*He flees out of the door.*

VOICE OF THE MANAGER

[*At the window again.*] Pippa, Pippa, are you still in there? Don't be afraid! They shall not harm one hair of your head!

BARMAID

[*Reenters.*] No one here? No one comes back, and out there lies a man bleedin' to death!

THE SECOND ACT

The interior of a solitary cabin in the mountains. The large, low room is in a frightful state of neglect. The ceiling is black from smoke and age. One rafter is broken, the others are bent and rudely propped up by posts of unhewn timber. Little pieces of board are shoved under the posts. The floor is made of clay and contains hollows and ridges; only around the rickety stove is there a brick tiling. Of the three small rectangular window-openings under which a charred bench runs along the wall, two are stopped up with straw, moss, leaves and boards; the third contains a window with three dim panes; instead of the fourth there are again boards and moss. On the same wall in the corner is the stove; farther toward the front, the table, which has been repaired. In the rear wall a door. Through it one can see into the gloomy hall, where rafters like those in the room are propped up, and upon a crooked, slanting, ladder-like stairway which leads to the loft.

A framework of boards in the room, filled with birch, beech and oak-leaves, upon which several old rags of clothing and bedding are lying, is the bed of Old Huhn, *to whom the cabin belongs. On the wall hangs an old gun, a*

ragged soft hat, articles of clothing, and several pictures cut from newspapers. More leaves are lying on the floor. In the corner a pile of potatoes. Bundles of onions and dried mushrooms are hanging from the ceiling. A single bright streak of light penetrates through the window from the clear moonlight outside. The hall likewise suddenly becomes light. Sneezing and heavy breathing can be heard. Thereupon Old Huhn *becomes visible, still carrying* Pippa *in his arms. He enters the room and lays* Pippa *down on the bed of leaves, covering her up with the rags lying there. Then he brings from a corner an old holder for a pine-torch in which there is a splinter of pine, and lights it, at the same time looking very excitedly at the girl. The first gusts of a rising storm are audible. Snow blows into the house.* Huhn *now takes a bottle from a shelf, and pours brandy down* Pippa's *throat. She draws a deep breath; he covers her up more carefully, runs to the stove, and builds a fire with the pile of faggots lying there.*

Huhn

[*Rises abruptly, listens at the door, and calls with insane haste and secrecy.*] Come down, come down, ol' Jacob,— ol' Jacob, I've brought somethin' home for you!

[*He listens for an answer and laughs to himself.*

Pippa

[*Groans, revived by the spirits; suddenly she*

sits up with an effort, looks around terrified, presses her hands before her eyes, takes them away again, moans, jumps up, and flees, like a frightened bird, blindly against the wall of the room.] Mrs. Wende, Mrs. Wende, where am I? [*Clawing the wall in a terrified way, she looks behind her, and seized anew by desperate terror, she gropes blindly, now here, now there, toward the walls.*] I am smothering, help, don't bury me! *Padre! Padrone!* Oh, oh! Help! Mrs. Wende, I'm dreaming!

HUHN

[*Trots up to her, whereupon she immediately stretches out her hands in speechless terror, to ward him off.*] Be quiet, hush; ol' Huhn won't hurt you none! — and so ol' Jacob will be friendly, too. [*Since* PIPPA, *completely benumbed, does not change her position of defence, he takes a few uncertain steps toward her, but stops suddenly again, arrested by her expression of insensate terror.*] That won't do! — Well? — Speak a word! — Don't bruise yourself against the wall! — In my house it is fine; out o' doors Death is lyin' in wait! [*He stares for a while searchingly and expectantly; suddenly a thought comes to him.*] Wait,— Jacob, bring the goat down! Jacob! — Goat's milk is warmin'. Goat's milk will be good. [*He imitates the loud and soft bleating of goats and sheep, as if of a drowsy herd in the stall.*] Baa, baa, baa! — Listen, she is coming down the stairs. Jacob, Jacob, bring her in!

[PIPPA *has perceived the door and fixes her eyes upon it; she rises involuntarily and rushes to it, in order to escape.* HUHN *blocks her way.*

HUHN

I won't lay hand on you! I won't touch you, girlie! You must — you must stay with me.

PIPPA

Mrs. Wende! Mrs. Wende!

[*She pauses and buries her face in her hands.*

HUHN

Don't be afraid. Somethin' has happened — and somethin' will happen! Sometimes there are traps set in the spring . . . and sometimes the yellow-hammer comes in winter!

[*He takes a deep draught from the bottle of spirits.*

[*A goat puts its head in at the door.*

HUHN

Wait, Jacob, let Lizzie stand outside! She will give me a drop o' milk.

[*He seizes a little stool, trots into the hall and milks the goat, at the same time obstructing the door. In the meantime a little more composure seems to have come into* PIPPA'S *manner. In her moaning and groaning is expressed impotent submission; she feels cold again, and is attracted involuntarily by the bright spot on the wall, the reflection of the fire in the stove; there she seems to thaw out to some power of reflection, and kneeling on the ground, she stares into the crackling flames.*

PIPPA

Oh, santa Maria, madre di dio! Oh, madre Maria! Oh, santa Anna! Oh, Maria, madre santa!

[OLD HUHN *has finished milking and re-enters.* PIPPA'S *fear and apprehension rise immediately; but he comes up to her, puts the little jug with the milk at some distance from her, and retires.*

HUHN

Drink some goat's milk, you precious child, you!

[PIPPA *looks at* HUHN *dubiously, and plucks up courage sufficiently to drink with greedy haste the milk from the jug he has offered her.*

HUHN

That's the way the dead lap their milk too! [*Striking his knees with both hands, he breaks out into hoarse triumphant laughter.*] Now she's had enough; she'll get back her strength! [*Therewith he totters off, pulls from behind the stove a little sack, and shakes breadcrumbs from it out upon the table, takes a broken iron pot containing potatoes from the warming-oven and puts them down, too; takes a drink, sets the bottle of spirits likewise on the table and sits down for supper on the bench behind the table. A new gust of wind strikes the house; in a tone of wild challenge* HUHN *speaks as if answering.*] Now you c'n come, for all I care. Jes' try, jes' try, if anyone c'n git her away!

PIPPA

Huhn, old Huhn, oh, do let me go! Why, I

know you! You are Father Huhn! Why, what has happened? Why am I here at your house?

HUHN

Because that's the way it must be in the world.

PIPPA

What must be so? Pray, what do you mean?

HUHN

What you don't have, you must take!

PIPPA

What do you mean? Why, I don't understand!

HUHN

Don't touch me, or my heart will burst!

[*He has become pale, trembles, breathes deeply and moves away, because* PIPPA *has touched his hand with her lips.*

PIPPA

[*Starts and flees, throwing herself against the locked door.*] Help! Help!

HUHN

Nothin' doin'! There's no gettin' out there! You has to stay with me, and it's nice here with me. You wouldn't have it nicer — you wouldn't have it nicer at the Emperor's! So you must obey, you must be obedient.

PIPPA

Father Huhn, Father Huhn, you won't do anything to hurt me, will you?

HUHN

[*Shaking his head decidedly.*] And no one else shall harm a hair of your head! no father, nor no manager, nor nobody. Here you are safe, and you are mine.

PIPPA

Am I to be buried here forever?

HUHN

A caterpillar, a chrysalis, a butterfly! Listen, you will open your grave sometime. Listen, listen, the Wild Huntsman is coming! watch out! the Wild Huntsman is coming from the mountains. Do you hear? Out there the little children are moaning. They are standing naked on the cold stones in the hall and wailing. They are dead! Because they are dead, they are afraid. Stoop down, put on a hood; otherwise he'll seize you with his fist by the hair, and, God have mercy on you, down you go into the whirlpool. Come here, I'll hide you! I'll wrap you up! Listen, too, how it howls and spits and mews; there it goes down from the roof with a few wisps of straw! For all o' me, let it blow the old skull bare! Now it is over. Say, that was a spook, wasn't it? I am a spook and you are a spook, and the whole world's a spook, that's all, but sometime perhaps it will be different.

[*A furious gust of wind has raged past.* PIPPA *shows again an expression of almost insensate terror.* HUHN *stands in the centre of the room, even now, when deep, uncanny silence reigns. Now a voice is heard outside, and a distinct*

knocking. At first at one of the windows which are nailed shut, then at the pane, which is darkened by a shadow. Huhn *gives a convulsive start, and glares at the apparition.*

A Voice

[*Softened from without.*] Tu whit, tu whoo! — Confound it, that's a devil of a morning breeze, isn't it? Does any one live here? My very best God bless you! If you don't hurt me, I won't hurt you! Only give me some hot coffee and let me sit by the fire till daylight comes! Your most obedient servant, a travelling journeyman!

Huhn

[*In a dumb rage.*] Who wants anything here? Who is lounging around old Huhn's house? — What man? What ghost? I'll help you out of there!

[*He seizes a heavy club and rushes out of the door.*

[*With a sigh* Pippa *closes her eyes. Now it seems as if something like a musical breeze were breathing through the gloomy room. Then, while the music ebbs and flows, growing louder and louder,* Michel Hellriegel *appears in the door. Excited and cautious, he moves into the circle of light from the pine splinter, his eyes suspiciously directed toward the dark.*

Hellriegel

Well, that's a rather musical den — Hullo,

Landlord! — Is there a mealworm playing the harmonica? — Hullo, landlord! [*He sneezes.*] This seems to be musical sneeze-wort. [Pippa *sneezes also.*] Did I do that, or was that someone else?

Pippa

[*Half asleep.*] Some one — seems to be — playing the harmonica here.

Hellriegel

[*Listening, without seeing* Pippa.] Quite right, a mealworm, according to my opinion. "Whisk, darling Ninna, what scrapes in the straw?" When at night you hear a rat gnawing, you think it is a saw-mill, and when a bit of draught comes through the crack of a door, and rubs two dry beech-leaves together, you think you hear a fair maiden lisping or sighing for her deliverer. Michel Hellriegel, you are very clever! you can even hear the grass grow in the winter! but I tell you, keep your wits about you! your mother is right! don't let your fantastic feelings run over like a milk-jug. Don't believe stiffly and firmly in everything that is not true, and don't run a hundred miles and more after a flying spider's web! — Good evening! My name is Michel Lebrecht Hellriegel! [*He listens awhile, no answer comes.*] Now I wonder that no one answers me, because, you know, there is a good fire in the stove, and because one might really expect something quite extraordinary here. It looks that way here! If, for example, I should see a parrot sitting on the kettle on the stove, stirring a sausage-soup with the cooking spoon, and screaming at me at the same time, "Scamp! rogue! horse-thief!" that

would be the least thing we might expect here. I won't insist on an ogre! or, if there is one, then there must be an enchanted princess, whom a cursed monster keeps in a cage; — for example, like the dainty little dancing-missy,— wait, I have a clever idea: I have bought an ocarina! I paid that old duffer who played for the dance in the tavern my last dollar for the ocarina here. And that was also very clever! — Why — I really don't know myself! perhaps because the name has such a peculiar sound! or I imagine that the little red-haired nymph is in it, and may perhaps jump and dance, when one plays on it. And now I really will try the experiment.

[*He puts the ocarina to his mouth, looks around searchingly and plays. At the first tones,* Pippa *rises with her eyes closed, trips to middle of the room and takes the position for dancing.*

Pippa

Yes, father, I'm coming! I am already here!

[Michel Hellriegel *drops the ocarina, and stares with wide open mouth, struck senseless by surprise.*

Hellriegel

There you see, Michel, this is what you get from it; now you are actually crazy.

Pippa

[*Opens her eyes, as if awakening.*] Is there any one here?

HELLRIEGEL

No, that is to say, except me, with your permission.

PIPPA

Who is talking there, and where am I, anyway?

HELLRIEGEL

In my confused and weary head!

PIPPA

[*Remembers* HELLRIEGEL *from the tavern, and flies into his arms.*] Help me! save me!

[HELLRIEGEL *stares down at the beautiful, Titian-red hair of the little head that is hidden on his shoulder. He does not move his arms, which* PIPPA *holds in tight embrace.*

HELLRIEGEL

Now if I — now if I . . . for example, I'll suppose that I had my arms free now, I should now, in spite of my mother's disapproval, write a brief memorial in my little book, if possible in verse. But I cannot get my hands free. Imagination has tied me up! It has tied me up — the deuce take me — in an accursed peculiar fashion, so that my heart thumps in my throat, and has made a red knot in front!

PIPPA

Help me! help me! set me free! save me from the frightful old monster!

HELLRIEGEL

What is your name, pray?

PIPPA

Pippa!

HELLRIEGEL

Right, to be sure! I heard the fellow with the riding boots call something like that. Then the fellow was gone; he sneaked off. When they massacred the Italian dog, he preferred to be elsewhere. And you too were gone when I went back, . . . that is to say, we, with the dying Italian. At least I didn't find you downstairs, and I didn't go with them up to his bedroom.— I'd have liked to ask him about you, but he had forgotten his Italian!

PIPPA

Come away, come away from here! Oh, don't forsake me!

HELLRIEGEL

No! You needn't worry, we two will never forsake each other. Whoever, like me, once has a bird will not let it fly away again so easily. So, Pippa, sit down, be quiet, and we will consider the affair seriously, as if no screw were loose!

[*He gently releases himself, takes* PIPPA'S *little finger with chivalrous affectation and modesty between his forefinger and his thumb, and leads her to a little footstool in the light of the fire, where she sits down.*

HELLRIEGEL

[*Standing before* PIPPA, *with fantastic gestures.*] There, a dragon has carried you off — I

thought so at once in the tavern — stolen you away from the Italian magician, and because I am a wandering artist, I immediately took it upon myself to liberate you and ran at once quite aimlessly to — I didn't know where.

PIPPA

Where do you come from? Who are you anyway?

HELLRIEGEL

A son of the Widow Hellriegel, the fruit-vender.

PIPPA

And where do you come from?

HELLRIEGEL

From our Lord's great sausage kettle!

PIPPA

[*Laughs heartily.*] But you talk in such a funny way!

HELLRIEGEL

I have always been noted for that.

PIPPA

But just look, I am really of flesh and blood, and crazy old Huhn is an old glass-blower who has lost his job, nothing more; that's where he got his goitre from and his puffy cheeks; you know, there aren't any fiery dragons.

HELLRIEGEL

God help me, why not?

PIPPA

Quick! Take me back to Mother Wende!

Come along with me; I know the way to Redbrook Gorge, we won't lose our way. [*Since* Hellriegel *shakes his head in refusal.*] Or are you really going to leave me alone again?

Hellriegel

[*In vigorous denial.*] I won't sell my ocarina!

Pippa

[*Laughs, pouts, timidly comes close to him.*] What in the world have you to do with the ocarina? Why won't you speak a single sensible word? Why, you keep talking nonsense! You are so stupid, Signore Hellriegel! [*Kissing him fondly, half crying.*] Why, I really don't know how stupid you are!

Hellriegel

Wait! Now it begins to dawn on me! [*He takes her by the head, looks closely into her eyes, and with quiet decision presses his lips long and fervently on hers.*] Michel isn't going to let himself be called stupid!

[*Without releasing each other they both look at each other confusedly and somewhat uncertainly.*

Hellriegel

Something is going on within me, Pippa, a remarkable change!

Pippa

Oh, you dear. . . .

Hellriegel

[*Supplying the name.*] Michel.

PIPPA

Michel, what are you doing?

HELLRIEGEL

I am quite perplexed myself! Please excuse me from answering! You are not angry on account of that?

PIPPA

No.

HELLRIEGEL

Couldn't we perhaps do that again right off?

PIPPA

But why?

HELLRIEGEL

Because it is so simple! — It is so simple, and so crazy, and so — delightful, enough to make one lose one's senses.

PIPPA

I think, Michel, you have lost them already.

HELLRIEGEL

[*Scratching his head.*] If one could only rely on it! I tell you there is nothing reliable in the world! — Do you know, I've got another idea! Let's take plenty of time — consider the thing thoroughly! Come, sit down here beside me. Now, firstly, this is a hand! . . . If you will permit me, we'll proceed at once to the main point: whether there is a spring in the watch works? [*He listens at her breast, like a physician.*] Why, you are alive; why you have a heart, Pippa!

Pippa

But Michel, do you doubt that?

Hellriegel

No, Pippa,— but if you are alive — then I must first get my breath!

[*Really struggling for breath, he steps away from her.*

Pippa

Michel, we haven't any time. Just listen to the heavy breathing outside, and the continual tramping around the cabin! He has passed the window three times. He will kill you, Michel, if he finds us.— Do you see? He is staring in again.

Hellriegel

Oh, you poor little princess "Timidity"! There, you don't yet know my mother's son! Don't be afraid of the old gorilla! If you wish, I'll throw a boot at his head!

Pippa

Michel, no, Michel, don't do that!

Hellriegel

Certainly! — or for all I care, we'll begin the new life in another way! Let's establish ourselves first quite firmly and soberly in the world! Let's cling to reality, Pippa, shall we? you to me and I to you! But no, I hardly dare to utter that, because, you know, you are as fragrant and fragile as a blossom on a supple stem! enough, child, no fantastic ideas! [*He takes off his knapsack and unbuckles it.*] Here in the knapsack is a case.

Just watch, Michel has brought with him into the world a real heritage of mother wit for all emergencies. [*He holds out a little box.*] Practical! Here are practical things! First of all, here: this is an enchanted tooth-pick, you see, formed like a sword; with it you can stab to death giants and dragons! — Here in a little bottle I have an elixir, and we'll give the monster a dose of it; it is a so-called sleeping potion, indispensable for giants and magicians. You wouldn't know it from the looks of this little reel of cotton, but if you bind one end fast here, at once the little ball will tumble over before you, and hop away ahead of you, like a little white mouse, and if you keep following the thread, you will come directly into the promised land.— There is also a nice little doll's table here; but that, Pippa, is of no consequence; it is merely a magic table. Am I not quite a fellow, and haven't you confidence in me now?

Pippa

Michel, indeed, I don't see all that!

Hellriegel

Just wait, then I shall have to open your eyes for you!

Pippa

I do believe it. Hide! The old man is coming!

Hellriegel

Tell me, where were you born, Pippa?

Pippa

I think in a city by the sea.

HELLRIEGEL

There now, I thought so at once. Was it as funny there as it is here, and were there generally clouds in the sky there, too.

PIPPA

Never, Michel, did I see one there, and day after day the sun shone.

HELLRIEGEL

There! don't you see what kind of a person you are? Do you think my mother would believe that? — Now just tell me, do you believe in me?

PIPPA

A thousand times, Michel, in everything.

HELLRIEGEL

Very good! then we will go over the mountain, and that is really just a trifle! I know every highway and byway here, and over there the spring will begin at once.

PIPPA

O, no, no, no! I can not! *moi padre è tanto cattivo!* he will lock me up again for three days and give me only bread and water to eat!

HELLRIEGEL

Well, Pippa, your father is quite good natured now! his ways are now quite sober! he is remarkably humble! I was surprised to see how patient he is! how cold blooded! not at all like an Italian: — gentle! — he will never even hurt a fly again! — Do you understand what I really mean, Pippa? — Your father has played and won until he has

finally lost. Every one loses eventually, Pippa! that is to say, you know,— your father is dead.

PIPPA

[*More laughing than weeping, throwing her arms around* HELLRIEGEL'S *neck.*] Ah, then I have no one else in the whole world! No one but you!

HELLRIEGEL

That is enough, too, Pippa. I'll sell myself to you with skin and bones, from my head to my feet, as I am,— and hurrah, hurrah, now let's start on our wanderings!

PIPPA

You will take me with you? You won't leave me?

HELLRIEGEL

I leave you? *I* not take you with me? . . . and now I'll guide you, now rely on me, you shall not stub your foot against a stone.— Listen, how the glass on the mountain fir-trees is chiming! Do you hear? The long cones are tinkling. It is nearly daybreak, but bitter cold. I'll wrap you up, I'll carry you! We'll keep each other warm, won't we? And you shall be surprised to see how fast we shall get away! A little bit of light is already creeping in! Just look at my finger-tip; there is a little bit of sun on it. One can eat that! One must lick it off! Then one doesn't get stale, and keeps one's hot blood! Do you hear the birds sing, too, Pippa?

PIPPA

Yes, Michel!

HELLRIEGEL

Peep, peep! that might be a mouse, a yellow-hammer, or a door-hinge — never mind! they all know that something's happening! the old house creaks from end to end! Sometimes I have actually sublime feelings; when the tremendous event takes place, and the ocean of light is pouring from the hot golden pitcher!

PIPPA

Michel, don't you hear voices calling?

HELLRIEGEL

No, I hear only one voice; it sounds as if a steer were roaring in the pasture!

PIPPA

It is old Huhn! Horrible!

HELLRIEGEL

But he is calling something strange!

PIPPA

There he stands, Michel, don't you see him?

HELLRIEGEL

[*With* PIPPA *at the window.*] Yes, that does seem to be a terrible wood-god! — with his beard and eyelashes full of icicles, and his hands outspread and raised, he stands there and does not move! His closed eyes are directed toward the east!

PIPPA

Now the first morning-light falls on him.

HELLRIEGEL

And he screams again!

PIPPA

Do you understand what he is calling?

HELLRIEGEL

It sounded like . . . it sounds like . . . like . . . a heralding of great joy.

[*A peculiar cry, slowly and powerfully increasing, is audible, uttered by old* HUHN *and sounding like:* "Jumalaï!"

HELLRIEGEL

It sounds to me like ju . . . jumalaï.

PIPPA

Jumalaï? what does that mean?

HELLRIEGEL

I don't know exactly, little Pippa. But methinks it means: "Joy for all!"

[*The cry* "Jumalaï" *is repeated more loudly, while it grows lighter in the room.*

PIPPA

Are you weeping, Michel?

HELLRIEGEL

Come little Pippa, you are mistaken!

[*Tenderly embracing,* PIPPA *and* HELLRIEGEL *move out of the room. The curtain falls, and music, which began with the light on* HELLRIEGEL'S *finger, swells, and as it grows louder, depicts the mighty rising of the winter sun.*

THE THIRD ACT

In the interior of a snow-bound hut on the ridge of the mountain. One looks into a large, low and pleasant room with raftered ceiling, enclosed by raftered walls. Three little well guarded windows are in the wall at the left; under them runs a stationary bench. The rear wall is broken by a little door which leads to the hall. Rustic cupboards with little pictures painted on them form a cozy corner at the left. Neatly arranged kitchen utensils and coloured plates decorate the open upper half of one cupboard. At the right of the door is the customary tile stove with a bench. In it the fire is crackling vigourously. The bench by the stove joins the stationary bench on the right wall. In the corner thus formed there stands a large, heavy brown rustic table; over it hangs a lamp; wooden chairs painted in gay colours surround it. A large Black Forest clock beside the door moves its brass pendulum slowly. So far the room has the character peculiar to the dwellings of the mountaineers in better circumstances. An unusual thing is a table at the left in front with a reading desk, an old book lying open upon it, and covered with many kinds of books and strange objects, such as: a lamp between cobbler's

glass globes, a glass-blower's lamp with glass tubes, old apothecary's bottles, a stuffed fulmar, etc. Moreover, on the wall hang a number of objects obtained by excavation — stone knives, hammers, and spear-points of the so-called stone age, and a collection of ordinary hammers for geological purposes. Still more unusual is a model of a Venetian gondola of fine workmanship, which rests on a stand before the reading desk, as well as other models of antique, mediæval, and modern ocean and river boats, which hang down from the ceiling, and a large telescope with a tripod. On the floor are handsome oriental rugs. The little windows glow from the light of the setting sun, which brings out the objects in the room sharply and fantastically. In the right wall is a door.

Jonathan, *a dumb, unkempt fellow about thirty years old, is washing plates in a little wooden tub, which stands on two stools near the door. Someone knocks several times on the hall door. The mute pays no attention to it, the door is opened, and the* Manager *appears, muffled up like a mountaineer, with his gun thrown over his shoulders and his snow-shoes under his arm.*

Manager

Jonathan, is your master at home? Jonathan, you lout, answer me! The devil take you if he is not at home! Has he by chance gone to pluck frost flowers? or catch moths with a butterfly net? Brr! It is villainously cold out of doors, Jonathan!

[Jonathan *turns, claps his hands together above his head with joy and surprise, wipes them on his blue apron and kisses the* Manager's *right hand.*

Manager

Is the old man at home, Jonathan? old Wann? [Jonathan *utters sounds and makes gestures.*] You beggarly idiot, express yourself more clearly! [Jonathan *takes still greater pains, points vehemently out of the window, as a sign that his master has gone out, then runs to the clock, which points to a quarter of five, indicates with his hand that his master had intended to return at half past four, shrugs his shoulders over it as if surprised that he had not yet returned home, hastens back to the window, presses his nose against it, shades his eyes with his hand and reconnoiters.*] Very well, I comprehend! He is away and will be back immediately; in fact, should already have returned. [*The dumb man imitates a dog saying* "bow wow."] To be sure, he has taken his two St. Bernard dogs with him. I understand, all right! wants to give himself and his dogs a little exercise! — Brush me off, you scoundrel, I'll stay here!

[*Since he looks quite like a snowman, he goes back to the hall, shakes and beats the snow off, the mute assiduously helping him.*

[*In the meantime, a venerable old man comes almost noiselessly in through the door at the right. He is tall and broad shouldered, and long waving white hair surrounds his powerful head. His stern, beardless face is, as it were, covered with*

runes. Bushy eyelashes overshadow his large prominent eyes. The man seems to be ninety years old or more, but as if his age were strength, beauty and youth raised to a high power. His clothing consists of a blouse made of coarse linen with wide sleeves, reaching to below the knees. He wears round, red woolen laced shoes and a leather girdle around his loins. In this belt, rests, as he enters, his large, finely formed right hand. It is Wann.

[Wann *directs an attentive and smiling glance at the hall, walks quietly through the room and sits down at the reading desk behind the table. He leans his elbows on the table, thoughtfully running his fingers through his hair, the white curls of which fall down on the open folio, on which his eyes are fixed. The* Manager, *having taken off his overcoat, enters again. He does not perceive* Wann *at first.*

Manager

Oh, you gazelles! — sweet twins! — There! Now we will make ourselves as comfortable as possible for the present in the old wise-acre's room!

Wann

That's just what I think, and moreover, we'll drink black Falernian wine.

Manager

[*Surprised.*] The devil! — Where did you come from so suddenly?

WANN

[*Smiling.*] Yes, if one only knew exactly, Manager! — Welcome to the country! — Jonathan!

MANAGER

Indeed! One sees all sorts of colours swim before one's eyes when one has slipped and clambered up for four long hours. I had black glasses, but in spite of that my organs of sight seem to me like a pond to the bottom of which I have sunk, while on the surface of it little coloured islands keep swimming around!

WANN

And you'd like to get up on one of them? Shall I perhaps get a hook and line?

MANAGER

Why is that?

WANN

Well, the thought just went through my mind.— At any rate, you are a master in the use of snow-shoes and as venturesome, as for instance, even a stag is generally only in November, and the sparrow-hawk only when he is in pursuit of prey, and his hunter's rage has made him blind and deaf to all dangers; that thought occurred to me, when I saw you gliding like a bird from top of the Sturmhaube! And since you are a human being, I venture to guess a third human possibility: you would like perhaps to sweat out some distemper.

MANAGER

What doesn't a man think of when he has nothing in the world to do, but summer and winter, in

all kinds of weather, to go walking in the milky way!

Wann

[*Laughing.*] I grant that sometimes I may ride my hobby horse a little too high in the air, and that I have therefore become somewhat far-sighted, but I also still have pretty good vision for things near by.— Take, for instance, this sweet child here from Murano and the beautiful decanter of crystal, full of dark wine that Jonathan is bringing us for our consolation.

[Jonathan *has brought in two large, old, fine Venetian goblets and a cut glass carafe of wine on a large silver tray and put them on the table.* Wann *carefully fills the glasses. Each of the men seizes one and lifts it reverently against the window, through which a faint light is still gleaming.*

Manager

Montes chrysocreos fecerunt nos dominos! Do you know, how you seem to me sometimes, Wann? Like one of those legendary gold-seeking chaps, whom the sour-krout-eating, hog-bristled vulgar gang of rowdies in our mountains sometimes call Dagos.

Wann

Really? What kind of a man would that be, my dear Manager?

Manager

Like one of those men, who in Venice possesses an Arabian fairy palace of gold and jasper in the

midst of the water, but who, here with us, acts as if he could not count up to three, and who will eat any mouldy bread crust.

Wann

Salute! We'll drink to that, my dearest Manager!

[*They drink each other's health and then laugh heartily.*

Wann

So you take me for that kind of a person! Leaving out the bread crumbs, for I am not conscious of any such hypocrisy, there's perhaps a grain of truth in the supposition. Even if I am not exactly one of those Venetians with magic powers, who sometimes appear to woodcutters and other fantastics, and who possess the caverns filled with gold, the grottos and castles in the interior of the earth, yet I do not deny that these mountains are to me to a certain degree gold-bearing.

Manager

Ah, if one could only be so quietly and contentedly resigned in snow and ice as you, Mr. Wann! No anxieties about one's daily bread, no business, no wife — far above all kinds of folly that give men like us the headache, and so absorbed in learned studies that one cannot see the forest for the trees; that is really an ideal condition!

Wann

I see that my image varies sometimes in your managerial soul. Now I am to you a legendary personality, who has a house in Venice, then again

a retired major, who innocuously lives on his pension.

MANAGER

Yes, God knows it is not really easy to form the right conception of you!

WANN

Jonathan, light the lamps! I hope you will see through me somewhat better by lamplight!

[*A short pause ensues; the uneasiness of the* MANAGER *rises.*

MANAGER

What are you really waiting for, up here, year in and year out, Wann?

WANN

For many things!

MANAGER

What, for example?

WANN

Everything that the rhumb-rose brings: clouds, mists, ice-crystals! for the silent double lightning of the great Pan-fires! for the little flame that rises from the hearth! for the songs of the dead in the waterfall! for my death! for the new beginning and entrance into another musical cosmic brotherhood!

MANAGER

And don't you sometimes find it tedious, all alone?

WANN

Why should I? *Se tu sarei solo sarei tutto tuo.* And tedium is where God is not!

MANAGER

That would not be sufficient for me, master! I always need external stimulation.

WANN

Well, whatever keeps the passion of a great veneration pulsating in us, is, I think, one too.

MANAGER

Yes, yes, very well! but with me, as old as I am, there must always be something young, merry, full of life connected with it.

WANN

Like this lady-bird for example. All winter long I have it here on the table, among all sorts of things, for company. Just take a close look at such a little animal. When I do that, I can actually hear the spheres thunder! If you hear it, you will become deaf.

MANAGER

I don't understand this figure of speech.

WANN

Quite simply: the little animal on my finger is not aware of me, nor is it aware of you. And yet we are here and the world about us, which it, confined in its sphere, is not able to comprehend. Our world lies outside of its senses. Just think what lies outside of ours! Could, for example, your

eye tell how the brook murmurs and the clouds rumble? You would never learn that that is so, if you did not have the sense of hearing. And if, on the other hand, you had the keenest sense of hearing, you would still not in all eternity know anything of the magnificent outpourings of light in the firmament.

MANAGER

Thanks for the private lesson! Let's wait till another time! To-day I have no patience. I was referring to something quite different.

WANN

[*Lifting his glass.*] To the sweet child of Murano, probably!

MANAGER

For all I care! — how do you know that?

WANN

Why does one have an observatory one thousand meters high in Central Germany? Why does one have a telescope with a lens which one made oneself? Shall not one sometimes peek down at the old sublunary world and keep a sharp watch on the children? And, finally, the man whose shoe does not pinch, does not come to the cobbler.

MANAGER

Very well! If you really are such a devilish fine physicist — leaving your cobbler's bench for the present out of the question — I confess that my shoe pinches in several places! — So just tell me, please, what happened last night in old Wende's tavern?

WANN

An Italian was stabbed to death!

MANAGER

Why do you turn over the pages of the book?

WANN

A recorder will be needed eventually.

MANAGER

And are the details noted in it?

WANN

For the present, no.

MANAGER

Well, then there is nothing in your telescope and your pretentious folios! — I shan't forgive myself for this affair! Why did I not keep a better watch! I would have bought her ten times over from the dog! . . . That's what happens when one is really tender-hearted!

[*He jumps up and walks around in the room very excitedly; finally he stops behind the telescope, turns it upon the tripod, and directs it toward the different pitch-dark windows, one after another. The wind whistles.*

MANAGER

It's funny how one feels up here with you, as if one were in a ship's cabin, in a storm on the great ocean!

WANN

And does that not express correctly the situation into which we are born?

MANAGER

That may be! but nothing can be accomplished by phrases of this sort. It will not take me out of my particular dilemma! It would be different if one could see anything through your telescope! But unfortunately I notice that that is also a delusion and a snare.

WANN

It is a pitch-dark night, Manager!

MANAGER

By daylight I don't need such a thing!

[*He leaves the telescope, walks up and down again, and finally stands still before* WANN.

WANN

Now out with it! Whom are you looking for?

MANAGER

Her.

WANN

According to that you have lost her?

MANAGER

I hunt for her and I cannot find her! I am tired of this folly, Mr. Wann! Pull the thorn out of my flesh, if you are one of those mad quacks! I cannot live, and I cannot die. Take a scalpel in your hand and search for the poisoned arrow-tip which is somewhere in my body and is working in deeper and deeper every minute. I am tired of the fear and the itching, the wretched sleep

and the wretched appetite; for all I care I will become a papal chorus singer, only to be rid for one minute of the desperate love longing which torments me.

[*Heavily breathing, he has sunk on a chair and wipes the sweat from his brow.* Wann *rises rather ceremoniously.*

Wann

And are you really in earnest about the treatment? You really wish to put yourself into my hands?

Manager

Certainly! yes! else why should I come?

Wann

And you will hold still, even if it is necessary to tear from your soul with a jerk the evil growth with the whole root system, which has ramified even to the tips of your toes?

Manager

Even if it is a desperate remedy!

Wann

Well, kindly pay attention then, my dear Manager. Now I clap my hands for the first time! [*He does so.*] If the patriarch could not do more than the man, what would indeed be the sense of age? [*He pulls out a long silk kerchief.*] Now I clap my hands for the second time! [*He does so.*] After that I shall tie this scarf over my mouth, as the Parsee does in prayer. . . .

MANAGER

[*Impatiently.*] And then I shall go my way, for I see you are chaffing me, Mr. Wann!

WANN

And then: *incipit vita nova,* Manager!

[*He pulls the bandage down over his mouth and claps his hands loudly. Immediately,* PIPPA, *as if summoned by magic, rushes in, half frozen, and struggling for breath; a cloud of mist follows her.*

PIPPA

[*Speaking in gasps, screaming hoarsely.*] Save him, save him! You men help! Thirty feet away from here Michel is dying in the snow! He is lying there suffocating! He can not get up! Bring a light! He is freezing to death! He can not go on! The night is terrible! Come with me! Come with me!

MANAGER

[*Stares in unbounded consternation, now at* PIPPA, *now at his host.*] What! are you the devil himself, Wann?

WANN

The treatment is beginning. Don't plead weariness! — A rope! Tie the end fast here!

[PIPPA *has seized* WANN *by the hand and pulls him out. The* MANAGER *follows as if stunned. The room is empty. The storm rages through the hall, sweeping in clouds of snow. Suddenly the head of old* HUHN *is visible in the hall door.*

After the old man has ascertained that no one is in the room, he steps in. He stares at the objects in the room, and when the voice of the returning Wann *is audible, he hides behind the stove.*

Wann

[*Still in the hall, pulling the others in by the rope.*] See that the doors are fastened, Jonathan!

[*Now* Michel Hellriegel *becomes visible, supported by* Wann *and the* Manager. *He is brought into the room, and laid upon the bench by the stove;* Pippa *pulls off his shoes and chafes his breast.*

Wann

[*To* Jonathan.] A cup full of black coffee, with brandy in it!

Manager

Hell and blazes! One's mouth freezes shut! It cuts out of doors like needles and butcher knives.

Wann

Yes, it is rather bad! One knows, at least, when one gasps for breath in these black flames of Hades, that one is a fighter, and is still far from the paradise of light. But one little spark of it has found the way.— Little girl, you fought your way through valiantly!

Pippa

Michel, *signore,* Michel, not I.

Wann

Well, how do you feel, Manager?

MANAGER

What kind of a man you are, I do not know! Otherwise I am as happy as a man on the gallows! It is after all quite as wonderful when a fly spots my shirt collar, as when you or any one else does such things.

WANN

Instead of one, there are two of them!

MANAGER

Thank you! My brains can take that in! My guess fell to be sure on Huhn, what more? instead of him it is a simpleton! — Jonathan, my snowshoes, quick!

WANN

Going already?

MANAGER

Two are enough. The third is too many. It is to be sure a rather new experience for me, to show magnanimity raised to the highest power, but as a permanent thing that would not be the right calling for me! — Don't you think so too, little Pippa?

PIPPA

[*Who, softly weeping, is rubbing* MICHEL's *feet, and wiping them with her hair.*] *Cosa, signore?*

MANAGER

You know me, don't you? [PIPPA *shakes her head.*] Didn't you ever see me anywhere? [PIPPA *shakes her head again.*] Didn't a good uncle for three or four years bring you sweetmeats, pretty corals and ribbands? [PIPPA *shakes her*

head emphatically.] Bravo! that's what I thought! Didn't you have a father who died?

[Pippa *denies it.*

Wann

Do you notice anything, Manager?

Manager

I should rather think I did!

Wann

What powerful old magician has a finger in the pie?

Manager

That's self-evident, certainly! There's a jolly game of magic going on. [*Tapping* Michel's *brow with his third finger.*] I say, when you awake, just knock at the door of heaven, perhaps the Lord God will say: come in! — Adieu! Rub Michel back to life! [*From the hall.*] I wish you all a good supper! It helped! I am cured! — Hello, Jock, unlock the abyss!

[*One can hear the house-door open, and the "* Hello *" of the* Manager *several times from out of doors.*

Hellriegel

[*Opens his eyes, jumps up and calls likewise.*] Hello — hello, there we have it, little Pippa!

Wann

[*Steps back, surprised and amused.*] Ah, what have we then, if I may ask?

HELLRIEGEL

Oh, that's so, little Pippa, we are not alone! Tell me, where does the old man come from so suddenly?

PIPPA

[*Softly, timidly.*] Oh, I didn't know what else to do!

HELLRIEGEL

But wasn't it splendid! Didn't you enjoy climbing up through storm and winter, going forward so merrily hand in hand?

WANN

Whither are you going, if one may ask?

HELLRIEGEL

Ah, old man, who would be so curious? Do I ask you why you muffle yourself up, warm yourself and eat baked apples?

WANN

Why, you certainly have the devil of a fine fellow here, my dear child!

HELLRIEGEL

Always roving on and never thinking of a goal! One thinks it too near or one thinks it too far! However, I do feel my bones buzzing, after all.

PIPPA

[*Timidly.*] Michel, couldn't we perhaps be just a wee bit grateful to the kind old man? Or don't you think we could?

HELLRIEGEL

Why? Why?

PIPPA

He saved us from freezing, you know!

HELLRIEGEL

Freezing to death? Michel wouldn't do that for the world! If we had only missed this asylum, then we should be ten good miles farther along now. Think, Pippa, ten miles nearer our goal! When one possesses a magic reel and has received innumerable unmistakable hints from on high, that one is destined to something . . . at least to invent malleable glass!

WANN

You laugh, my child? Don't you believe he can? [PIPPA *looks at* WANN *full of confidence and nods her head in emphatic affirmation.*] You do? To be sure, he speaks in a manner to inspire confidence! — Well, talk you your fill; I won't disturb you.

[*He takes a seat behind the table with the books, observing the two stealthily however; and at the same time turning the leaves of the big book.*

PIPPA

[*Mysteriously.*] Look around, Michel, and see where we are!

HELLRIEGEL

Quite in the right place, as I just now happened to think! The thread has led us quite right.

Didn't you notice, that it kept pulling us forward and away from the storm?

PIPPA

Why, that was the old man's rope, Michel!

HELLRIEGEL

Oh, it isn't the way you imagine, little girl! In the first place, we had to come here, anyway. First as we climbed I kept seeing the light. But even if I hadn't seen the light, an irresistible power within me drew and pulled me to this protecting roof!

PIPPA

I am so glad that we are safe, and yet I am just a little bit afraid still!

HELLRIEGEL

What are you afraid of?

PIPPA

I don't know! — Do you think the doors are fast shut?

WANN

[*Who has heard them.*] They are well locked!

PIPPA

[*Simply and innocently to* WANN.] Oh, sir, you are good, one can tell that by looking at you! but nevertheless . . . we must go on . . . mustn't we, Michel?

WANN

Why, pray tell? Who is following you?

HELLRIEGEL

No one, at least no one who is worrying us! but if you want to go on, then come, little Pippa.

WANN

Do you really think I'd let you go?

HELLRIEGEL

To be sure, how would you hold us, pray?

WANN

I have no lack of means for that! — I don't ask you whither you are going, where you are bound for with this frightened little moth that has flown against my lamp! But you will remain here through the night.

HELLRIEGEL

[*Planted in the middle of the room, with his legs wide apart.*] Hello! hello! I'm here, too.

WANN

Who knows what sort of a chap you are? Perhaps one who set out to learn to shiver! Then just have patience, you will learn it soon enough!

HELLRIEGEL

Keep your temper, dear uncle, the house is still standing! as my good mother says. But whether we go or stay, is our affair!

WANN

You seem to be full of high notions? Is that what you have in your sack?

HELLRIEGEL

Indeed? Do I look as if I had such things in my sack? That is possible, too! Fancy! — Well, enough! My knapsack will do pretty well, even if there are other things in it than just paltry notions. But if I take a fancy to go, then we will go; and you can then keep us here as little as two swans, who are travelling along the fleecy clouds, and moving toward the south like two dots.

WANN

That I admit, cloud-dweller! Yet I sometimes succeed in enticing such birds to my little trough, and I have done that with you, for example!

[JONATHAN *places on the table near the stove, southern fruits, steaming wine and pastry.*

HELLRIEGEL

What, a little trough! We are not hungry; we don't eat! Michel is not dependent of such things!

WANN

Since when, pray tell?

HELLRIEGEL

Since he washed the gold out of the mud!

WANN

[*To* PIPPA.] And you?

PIPPA

I am not hungry either!

WANN

No?

Pippa

[*Softly, to* Michel.] Why, there you have your magic table!

Wann

Then you won't do me the honour?

Hellriegel

I perceive, you are another of those people who have not the slightest idea who Michel Hellriegel is. What does it matter to me? And what good would it do me to explain it to you! To be sure you know that the archangel Michael is a hero and a dragon slayer; you do not doubt that. But I only need to go farther and — we'll say — swear ten oaths that I have had one wonderful experience after another since yesterday and have come out victorious in an adventure that is quite as prodigious, and you will say: why not pray? that is a man who plays the ocarina. I only need to tell of my knapsack. . . .

Wann

Oh, Michel, you delightful child of God, if I had suspected that it was you whom I have been following since daybreak with my telescope, and have enticed to my little feeding-trough for souls full of hot blood; I should have decorated the hut festively, and — that you may see that I too am something of a musician — should have received you with quintets and roses.— Be peaceable, Michel, make friends! And I advise you, eat a trifle! However sated with sky-blue you may be, only the soul can live on that, and not the body of a tall fellow like you.

HELLRIEGEL

[*Goes to the table, takes a plate, eats eagerly, and speaks softly and angrily to* PIPPA.] The grub is repugnant to me, I don't like it! Only to get away pleasantly. . . .

WANN

Eat, eat, Michel, don't argue! It is of no use to quarrel with your God, because you have to breathe and gulp and swallow! Then the swaying and the swinging are all the more delightful!

PIPPA

[*Has slipped over to* WANN *while* MICHEL *is absorbed in eating, and whispers to him joyously.*] I am so glad that Michel is eating!

WANN

He is walking in his sleep, so do not waken him! Otherwise he will drop his knife and fork, will jump one thousand meters into the air, and will probably break his neck and his legs.

[*Carefully, with both hands, he takes a model of a Venetian gondola from the table.*

WANN

Can you tell me what that represents?

PIPPA

No.

WANN

Now think! Did a black vessel like that never glide through your dreams?

PIPPA

[*Quickly.*] Yes, I remember, long ago, very long ago!

WANN

And do you know what a powerful instrument it is?

PIPPA

[*Thoughtfully.*] I only know, that once at night, I glided along between houses in such a bark.

WANN

That's right! [*To* MICHEL.] Now for all I care, you may prick up your ears too, so that you may gradually come to a realisation that a man is sitting here who understands something about aeronautics and many other things.

HELLRIEGEL

Display your wisdom!

WANN

Well, this little vessel here was created by the fairy city between two skies, namely, the city in which you, dear child, were born close to the heart of the earth. For you came from the fairy tale, and will return thither.

HELLRIEGEL

Hop! There comes something flying! Hop! another figure! a rat! a pickled herring, a girl! a miracle! keep on catching them! an ocarina! hop along, hop, hop! — As much as I, when I left my mother and started roving, was prepared for all sorts of hocus-pocus, and frisked joyfully on to

meet it, yet now the cold sweat often comes to my brow. [*With knife and fork in his hands, he stares reflectively into the distance.*] So he knows the city to which we are going!

WANN

To be sure I know it and — if you have confidence in me — I might strain a point and with advice and hints show you the way. Perhaps, who knows, even something more than that! For, to be frank, when one looks at you quite closely, doubts do come to one, after all, whether you really are moving through the sky, so sure and high and clear-sighted! You both of you have something about you like the birds that have been hurled from the trajectory, that have been cast away helpless somewhere at the North Pole. At the mercy of Fate, as it were! — Michel, do not start up! Don't get excited! You don't want to own up that you are terribly tired and weary, nor to the indefinite fear, the dread, that attacked you both at times, although you have, to some extent, escaped the horrors of this winter night's flight.

[*At the mention of the flight and the fear,* MICHEL *has jumped up and he and* PIPPA *have looked at each other fearfully. Now he moves uneasily to the hall door and listens intently.*

HELLRIEGEL

Be calm, Michel! There may be something at stake! — I assume that the doors are sufficiently barred and bolted? — Then in any case, we have nothing to fear! [*He comes back.*] All right! — It may be indeed that you are something unusual!

— We shall, in any case, be eating oranges tomorrow afternoon in the beautiful glass-maker's city by the sea, where the water blossoms into flowers of glass, and whose every little bridge and staircase and alley I have seen in my dreams my whole life long . . . in any case . . . but, all right! how far is it from here?

WANN

That depends, Michel, on how one goes.

HELLRIEGEL

Let's say, in a practical way.

WANN

[*Smiling.*] Then you will probably never arrive there. But if you go in this little boat, in which the very first lake-dwellers rode out into the lagoons, and from which, like fantastic incense from a floating censor, the artist's dream, Venice, arose, from which started the splendid stone city, as the crystal is precipitated from the lye, . . . in short, if you ride in this little boat, then by means of the wonderful power which you possess, you can see, all at once, everything for which your languishing soul strives.

HELLRIEGEL

Wait! First I want to commune quietly within myself.— Just let me take the thing into my own hand! [*He takes the little boat and holds it.*] Well, am I to ride in this little nut-shell? — Ah, how wise the old host is and what an ass Michel is! — How does one manage to get in here? — Oh, excuse me! I am no kill-joy! Now the thing be-

gins to dawn on me; I am only afraid that I shall get lost in the little boat! If it really must be, then I should rather take along with me my two sisters, my six older brothers, my uncles and all the rest of my relatives, who are, thank Heaven, all tailors.

WANN

Courage, Michel! when once one leaves the harbor there is no turning back; one must go out into the high billows. And you [*to* PIPPA] waft the magic wind into his sails!

HELLRIEGEL

I like that, that will be a jolly trip!

WANN

[*Taking* PIPPA's *tiny finger and drawing it around the edge of a Venetian glass.*] "Sail away, sail away, little gondola!" Say it after me.

PIPPA

"Sail away, sail away, little gondola."

WANN

"From winter night, and from snow and ice,
From hut storm-shaken, in North Wind's vice."

PIPPA

[*Laughing.*] "From winter night, and from snow and ice,
From hut storm-shaken in North Wind's vice."

WANN

"Sail away, sail away, little gondola."

[*From the glass, the edge of which* PIPPA

is rubbing, there comes a soft tone, which gets stronger and stronger, until its tones unite in harmonies, which, swelling, grow to a short but mighty storm of music, which abruptly dies away and ceases. Michel Hellriegel, *with eyes wide open, falls into a hypnotic sleep.*

Wann

Now Michel journeys solitary o'er the clouds,
Silent the journey is, for in those regions high,
All sound has died away, resistance finds he none.
Where are you?

Hellriegel

Grandly do I ride through roseate morn!

Wann

What do you see there?

Hellriegel

Oh, more wonders have I seen,
Than any human soul can ever comprehend,
And over hyacinthian seas I bend my flight!

Wann

But now your ship is dipping downward, is it not?

Hellriegel

I do not know. The mountains only rise to meet
My eye and like gigantic towers looms the world.

Wann

And now?

Hellriegel

And now I soundlessly have sunk to earth

Where 'mong the gardens glides my bark full silently.

Wann

You call them gardens, that you see?

Hellriegel

Yes, though of stone.
In lovely meadows blue are mirrored marble flowers
And lofty pillars quiver white in emerald vales.

Wann

But pause, my boatman,— tell me now just where you are!

Hellriegel

On ships I set my foot, on carpets soft and fine,
A stately gallery of coral me receives!
And now I knock three times upon a golden gate!

Wann

And what upon the knocker are the words you read?

Hellriegel

Montes chrysocreos fecerunt nos dominos!

Wann

What happens when the sound of knocking dies away?

[Michel Hellriegel *does not answer but rather begins to groan as if oppressed by a nightmare.*

Pippa

Wake him, oh wake him, do, you dear, you wise old man!

Wann

[*Taking the little boat from* Michel's *hands.*

Enough! To our secluded cabin come again
And to your exiled, snow-bound fellowmen return
And shake yourself, and send the golden travel-hoard
Into our laps, for we are sadly languishing.

[Michel Hellriegel *awakes, looks around perplexed, and tries to recall what has happened.*

Hellriegel

Hello! — Why does that damned old grunting ox Huhn stand before the gate and threaten me, and keep me from entering? Pippa! Just slip the golden key out through the grating! I'll steal in through a little side door! — Where? — Pippa! Confound it! no! where in the world am I? — Excuse me, old man, one shouldn't swear, when such a thing . . . even when one finds some one has made a fool of him! — What kind of an accursed receptacle can I have slipped into? — Confound it, what is going on here? — Where is Pippa? — have you the golden key with you? — Here, give it to me, let's open quickly!

Pippa

Wake up, Michel! you are dreaming! do remember!

HELLRIEGEL

Then I'd rather be a dreamer than to wake up in such a contemptible way, fourteen miles deep in a mud-puddle. One can no longer see one's hand before one's face. What does that mean? Who is pressing his thumb into my gullet? Who is squeezing the happiness from my breast with a mountain load of anxiety?

WANN

Don't worry, just don't worry, dear Michel. Everything in this house is in my power, and there is nothing in it that can hurt you.

HELLRIEGEL

Ah, master, why did they call me back so swiftly into this grave? Why did that wild, old ragamuffin of a beast not let me into my magic castle by the sea? Why, that was what I have always wanted! It was the very thing! I recognised it again, exactly, just as I dreamed it as a little boy sitting before the stove! And Pippa looked out of the window! And the water played sweetly like runs on a flute, below her, around the wall! Let's take the journey again! Give us your fascinating little gondola, and I won't hesitate . . . I'll offer you here my entire knapsack with all its precious contents!

WANN

No, Michel, not yet! have patience! to begin with, you seem to me much too hot-blooded. And I beg both of you to soothe your beating hearts and to be calm. Let well enough alone; and wait for to-morrow! In my house are many guest

rooms. Stay with me, I beg of you, till to-morrow! Do allow me for one night to entertain hope, perfect young hope! — Then continue your journey to-morrow, and God bless you! Jonathan, show the strangers upstairs!

HELLRIEGEL

We belong together, we'll not be separated!

WANN

Do what you will and may, dear Michel! Sleep will always take her out of your hands and you must leave her to fate and to God!

[HELLRIEGEL *has taken* PIPPA *into his arms. He looks at her and perceives that she is almost fainting from too great weariness; so he lays the sleeping girl on the bench by the wall.*

HELLRIEGEL

And you will stand security for her?

WANN

With word and deed!

HELLRIEGEL

[*Kisses* PIPPA *on the brow.*] Good-by till to-morrow, then!

WANN

Good-night! sleep well! — and far away in the Adriatic there dreams a house that is waiting for young, new guests.

[JONATHAN *stands in the door with a light,* HELLRIEGEL *tears himself away, and disappears with him in the hall.* WANN

looks at Pippa *for a while profoundly and reflectively; then he says:*

Wann

Into my winter cabin fairy magic came.
The robber broke the icy wall of wisdom down,
The golden haired one. Shelter have I offered him
From my paternal soul, that's full of ancient craft.
Who is the coxcomb, who would fain possess this child,
This child divine, that makes my boats go sailing off.
They creak and crackle, rocking lightly to and fro,
The ancient hulls, hung from the ceiling like antiques!
Why do I set this Michel in my fairy ship,
Instead of setting sail, with full flotilla's might,
Forsaken heavens conquering for myself anew
Triumphant; Pippa as the galleon in advance.
Oh, ice upon my head, and ice within my blood!
You melt away before a sudden breath of joy.
You holy breath, oh, kindle not within my breast
The fearful fires of greed and wild and evil lusts.
Lest I, like Saturn, my own children must devour.
Sleep! And your sleep I'll guard and I'll preserve for you
What's transient. And as empty phantoms pass me by,
So long as phantoms and not truth are in my soul,
And not the clear, invisible element alone.

[*He has raised the sleeping girl, and supporting her, he leads her slowly and with fatherly care into the bedroom. While he and* Pippa *are gone,* Huhn *comes*

forth from behind the stove, and glaring with fixed stare at the chamber door, he remains standing in the middle of the room. Wann *comes from the chamber walking backwards, closes the door after him and speaks without noticing* Huhn. *He has turned around toward the ship models, and so doing perceives* Huhn. *At first, doubting the reality of the apparition, he looks searchingly, holding his hand over his eyes; then he lets it fall, his every muscle becomes tense and the two men look at each other full of hatred.*

Wann

[*Slowly trembling.*] No — way — goes — here!

Huhn

[*In the same way.*] No — word — counts — here!

Wann

Come on!

[Huhn *moves up and they stand confronting each other in the position of combatants.*

Huhn

That is all mine! — all mine, all mine, all mine.

Wann

You black blood-thirsty creature! night-born lump of greed,
Now you at last gasp something out that sounds like words!

[Old Huhn *has attacked him, and they wrestle with each other; suddenly* Old Huhn *utters a frightful scream and immediately afterwards hangs defencelessly in* Wann's *arms.* Wann *lays the dying man down softly.*

Wann

So must it be, you rude and uncouth giant!
Beast so sick, and strong, and wild! — break into
Stables! Prey for beasts like you this snow-bound
hut of God
Does not afford.

THE FOURTH ACT

The events take place directly after those of the third act, in the same room. OLD HUHN, *drawing heavy, dreadful, gurgling breaths, is lying on the bench by the stove. His breast is bare, his long, rust-coloured hair falls to the floor.* WANN *stands upright beside him, with his left hand on the giant's breast.*

PIPPA, *trembling, and with an expression of great fear, comes from the chamber door at the right.*

WANN

Just come in, you trembling little flame, you! just come in! There is no longer any danger for you, if you are fairly cautious!

PIPPA

I knew it, oh, I knew it, and felt it, *signore!* Hold him down! bind him fast!

WANN

In so far as he can be bound, I can bind him.

PIPPA

Is it old Huhn, or isn't it he?

WANN

The agony distorts his face. But if you observe him more closely. . . .

PIPPA

Then he looks almost like you, yourself!

WANN

I am a human being and he is about to become one. Where do you get that idea from?

PIPPA

Non so, Signore!

[HELLRIEGEL *appears in the hall door.*

HELLRIEGEL

Where is Pippa? I suspected that the filthy idiot was at my heels! Pippa! Thank God, that you are now again under my protection!

WANN

Nobody has harmed a hair of her head, even when you were not here!

HELLRIEGEL

But it is better for me to be here!

WANN

Heaven grant it! Get me a pailful of snow! Bring me snow! We'll lay some snow against his heart, so that the poor captured beast, beating its wings against his breast, may be quieted!

HELLRIEGEL

Is he wounded?

WANN

That is very possible!

HELLRIEGEL

What good will it do us, if he recovers his strength? He will beat about with his fists and chop all three of us into little pieces!

WANN

Not me, nor anybody else, if you are sensible.

PIPPA

Why, it really is he! It really is Huhn, the old glass-blower!

WANN

Do you recognise him now? the guest who has come so late, to wait here for one who is higher? Just step near, child, don't be afraid! Your persecutor is himself now the persecuted! [HELLRIEGEL *brings a pailful of snow.*] What did you see out there, Michel, that you are as white as a sheet?

HELLRIEGEL

I hardly know! [*Putting on the ice.*] Why, it isn't the old hairy mountaineer at all that danced and pranced with you in the tavern, and from whom I fortunately carried you off.

PIPPA

Just look closely; it really is he!

WANN

But he has now become our brother!

PIPPA

What is the matter with you? Why do you look so?

WANN

What did you see out there, that you are as white as a sheet?

HELLRIEGEL

Well, if you must know, I saw pretty things! It was, so to speak, like a wall of gasping fish-mouthed women's faces, nice and terrifying, nice and hideous! I shouldn't care to have them here in the room. That's the way it is when one comes from the light into the darkness!

WANN

You are eventually going to learn how to shiver!

HELLRIEGEL

It certainly is no pleasure to be out there. Evidently the ladies have the sore throat; one can see that from their swollen, twitching, dark violet throats! — Else why should they have tied a thick neckerchief of long frothing worms about them?

WANN

You are looking around for assistance, aren't you, Michel?

HELLRIEGEL

If only the droll little angels do not force their way through the wall!

WANN

Michel, couldn't you go out of doors again, and call with a loud voice out into the darkness so that he will come?

HELLRIEGEL

No! that is going too far for me, I won't do that!

WANN

Do you fear the lightning that brings deliverance? Then be prepared to hear God's praise wailed out in a way which will chill you to the marrow, since otherwise the invasion of the pack is not to be prevented!

[OLD HUHN *utters such a scream of pain, that* PIPPA *and* HELLRIEGEL *break out into a compassionate wailing and moved by an involuntary impulse hasten to him to give him aid.*

WANN

No haste! It will be of no avail! There is no mercy here! Here the poisonous tooth and the white hot wind rage as long as they will! Here typhonic powers press out the shrill tortured shrieks of mad acknowledgments of God. Blindly, without pity, do they stamp it out of the wailing soul, speechless with horror.

HELLRIEGEL

Can't you assist him, old man?

WANN

Not without him whom you do not wish to call.

PIPPA

[*Trembling.*] Why is he so tortured? I have feared him and hated him, but why is he persecuted with such fury and such merciless hatred? . . . I do not demand it!

HUHN

I say, let go! let go! let go! Don't fasten your

fangs in my neck! Let go! let go! don't tear me limb from limb! Don't tear my body open! Don't tear me to pieces! don't tear my soul in two!

HELLRIEGEL

Confound it! If that is supposed to be a trial of strength, if the great fish-blooded creature thinks he can make an impression on anyone with that . . . it doesn't make an impression on me, at any rate! at the most only an enforced one! — Has he no more respect for what he has created, or has he no power, that he chops something up into bits every few minutes, and in this particular way, which we will hope is not the only pleasure he gets from the affair!

WANN

It would be best, Michel, for one of us to go and see what has become of him, for whom we are waiting so anxiously. Your remarks, you know, will not help us on.

HELLRIEGEL

You go out! I'll remain here.

WANN

Very well! [*To* PIPPA.] But don't you by any chance dance with him!

HELLRIEGEL

Oh, Lord! if one can jest in such a perplexing situation, what is one to say in misfortune?

WANN

"Trust none, prove all!" At any rate take care of the child!

[WANN *withdraws through the hall.*

PIPPA

Ah, if we were only away from here, Michel!

HELLRIEGEL

I wish so too! Thank heaven that we are on the summit now, at any rate! To-morrow, at daybreak — for all I care with a sledge — that will do very well — we can whiz down the southern slope. Then we shall be away forever from this region of ægilops and globe-lightning and grunting baboons!

PIPPA

Oh, if only he would stop screaming!

HELLRIEGEL

Let him scream! It is better here after all; the stillness outside screams even more horribly.

HUHN

[*Heavily.*] Murderer! Murderer!

PIPPA

He has spoken again! I believe the old toy-dealer has injured him!

HELLRIEGEL

Cling to me! Come close to my heart!

PIPPA

Oh, Michel, you are pretending to be so calm, and your heart is beating so wildly!

HELLRIEGEL

Like yours!

PIPPA

And his! — I can hear his beating too! — How powerfully it is working,— and how laboriously!

HELLRIEGEL

Indeed, is it really a heart, that is beating so?

PIPPA

What else could it be? Just listen, what else could beat so? I don't know, such a painful tremour passes over me . . . the pain throbs to the very tips of my toes — at every beat, as if I must keep time with it.

HELLRIEGEL

Just see, a cannibal's chest! Doesn't it look like a bellows, covered with shaggy red hair? And as if it must always be blowing something like a forge fire?

PIPPA

Oh, how the poor little captive bird keeps hopping so timidly against his ribs! Michel, what if I should just lay my hand on it?

HELLRIEGEL

I am willing! There can be nothing in the whole world that has such a miraculous effect!

PIPPA

[*Lays her hand against* HUHN's *heart.*] Why, I didn't know that old Huhn under his rags was as white as a girl! —

HELLRIEGEL

There, you see! it is taking effect! He is al-

ready quieter! And now let's give him a little wine; then let him peacefully slumber his life away.

[*He steps to the table to pour out some wine,* Pippa *lets her hand rest on* Huhn's *breast.*

Huhn

Who's layin' her little hand on my breast? I was settin' in there — in the dark — we was settin' in the dark! The world was cold! — there wasn't no day no more, no mornin' no more! There we was settin' around a cold glass-furnace! — and then there come some people, yes, yes, . . . then they come from far off, a-creepin' through the snow! They come from far off because they was hungry; they wanted to have a crumb of light upon their tongues! They wanted to drink a wee bit of warmth into their benumbed bones. That's so! — an' there they lay around at night in the glass-factory! We heard 'em groanin'! We heard 'em wailin'! An' then I got up, an' poked around in the ashpit — an' all at once a single little spark . . . a little spark flew up from the ashes! Oh, Jesus, what'll I do with the little spark, that all at once has flown out of the ashes? Shall I make a bow, little spark? Shall I catch you? Shall I strike at you, little spark? Shall I dance with you, little spark?

Hellriegel

Say yes, say yes, don't contradict him! — I say, just tell me, what comes next! Here, just drink a swallow first, old What-d'ye-call-him! "Your turn to-day, mine to-morrow!" We'll stick to-

gether, because in my innermost heart I am also just such an old snowed-in ghost of a glassmaker.

HUHN

[*After drinking.*] Blood! black blood tastes good! But I can do, too! I can make glass, too! O Jesus, what haven't I already got out of a glass-furnace! Pearls! Precious stones! Splendid goblets! Down you go with the pipe into the mixture! Never mind, I'll dance with you, little spark! Just wait, I'll fire up the glass-furnace again! How the white heat pours from the holes! No one can keep up with old Huhn! Did you see her dance around in the fiery air?

HELLRIEGEL

Whom do you mean, pray?

HUHN

Who? what? he actually don't know that the girl was born in a glass-furnace!

HELLRIEGEL

[*Giggling.*] Just listen, Pippa, you were born in a glass-furnace!

PIPPA

Ah, Michel, I feel like weeping.

HUHN

Dance! dance! so that it gets a bit lighter! Move hither, move thither, that men may get light! Light up! Light up! we must get to work!

HELLRIEGEL

I say, I'd like to have a hand in such an affair!

The deuce! And not merely a journeyman's piece of work. . . .

HUHN

We stood around in our glass-furnace and out of the starless night Fear came creepin' all around! [*He pants more heavily.*] Mice, dogs, beasts and birds crept into the fire! It got smaller and smaller and almost went out! We say to ourselves and say over and over again — O Jesus, the fear! into the fire! Then it went down! Then we shrieked! and again there came a little blue light! Then we shrieked again! And then it went out! I sat all alone, over my cold fire! I saw nothing! I poked around in the ashes. Suddenly, there flew up before me a little spark, a single little spark. Shall we dance again, little spark?

PIPPA

[*Fleeing to* MICHEL.] Michel, are you still here?

HELLRIEGEL

Well, to be sure. Do you think that Michel could possibly be a shirk? But this old man, God knows, is more than a cast-off glassmaker! Just see what a bloody, torturing pain convulses his features!

PIPPA

And how his heart struggles and how it stamps!

HELLRIEGEL

Like an eternal dance in the forge with the forge hammer!

PIPPA

And at every beat there is a twitching and a burning in my heart!

HELLRIEGEL

Mine too! I'm trembling in every limb, and feel impelled to struggle and stamp too!

PIPPA

Listen, Michel! It seems actually as if the same blow were striking deep down below and were knocking at the earth's surface.

HELLRIEGEL

Deep down below, yes, indeed, the same fearful hammer blow is striking.

HUHN

Shall I dance with you, little spirit?

[*Subterranean rumbling resembling thunder is heard.*

PIPPA

Michel, did you hear that subterranean rumbling?

HELLRIEGEL

No! come! you'd better take your hand from his heart. If everything is tottering and the earth quakes and we shoot, no one knows whither, like an involuntary meteor out into space, still it is better for us to clamp ourselves into an inextricable tangle. I am only jesting!

PIPPA

Ah, Michel, do not jest now!

HELLRIEGEL

To-morrow we shall both jest about it!

PIPPA

Do you know, I feel almost as if I were only a single spark and were floating quite alone and lost in infinite space!

HELLRIEGEL

A little dancing star in the firmament, Pippa, why not?

PIPPA

[*Whispering.*] Michel, Michel, dance with me! Michel, hold me fast, I do not want to dance! Michel, Michel, dance with me!

HELLRIEGEL

That I will do, God helping me, when we are once out of our difficulties here! Think of something splendid! When this night is once over, I have made up my mind, that from now on you shall walk only over roses and carpets. Then we shall laugh, when we are once down below in our castle by the sea . . . we shall get there, I assure you . . . and then I shall lay you down in your little silken bed, and I shall be always bringing you sweets . . . and then I shall cover you up and tell you stories that will make you shiver . . . and then you will burst out laughing so sweetly that the music will fill me with pain. And then you will sleep, and I shall play all night long, softly, softly, on a harp of glass.

PIPPA

Michel!

HELLRIEGEL

Yes, Pippa!

PIPPA

Where are you?

HELLRIEGEL

Here with you! I am holding you close in my arms.

HUHN

Shall we dance again, little spirit?

PIPPA

Michel, hold me . . . don't let me go! — he is pulling me! . . . something is pulling me! — or else I shall have to dance! — I shall have to dance! — or else I shall die! — let me go!

HELLRIEGEL

Really? Now I think it would be best under these really somewhat nightmarelike circumstances, if one remembers one's valiant old Swabian blood! If one's limbs are all twitching, why shall one not dance the last dance for a poor old wretch, who lays great value on it? In my opinion, that cannot be so bad. It was not in vain that there were jolly fellows who conjured away Hell-fire from Satan's tail and lighted their tobacco pipes with it. Why shall one not strike up a dance tune for him? [*He brings out his ocarina.*] Rumpumpum, rumpumpum! how does the time go anyway? All right, if you like, take your place for the dance, sweet Pippa. If it really has to be . . . one must not be too particular on this earth about the time

and place! [*Trills and runs on the ocarina.*] Dance away to your heart's content! It is far from being the worst thing to be merry with one who is afflicted unto death!

[*To the tones of the ocarina which* Michel *plays,* Pippa *makes slow and painful dancing movements, which have something convulsive about them. Gradually the dance becomes wilder and more bacchantic. A rhythmic trembling seizes* Old Huhn's *body. Also he drums with his fists in a kind of frenzy, keeping time to the rhythm of* Pippa's *dance. At the same time he seems to be shaken by a tremendous chill, like one who comes from piercing cold into a warm room. From the depths of the earth come muffled sounds; rumbling thunder, sounds of triangles, cymbals and drums. Finally old* Wann *appears in the hall door.*

Huhn

I can make glasses, too! I can make them. . . . [*With a staring, hatefilled look at* Wann.] I can make them and break them in two again! — Come — with — me — into the dark — little spark.

[*He crushes the drinking-glass which he still holds in his hands; the broken pieces tinkle.* Pippa *shudders and a sudden rigidity overcomes her.*

Pippa

Michel!

[*She reels, and* Wann *receives her in his arms. She is dead.*

WANN

So you did accomplish your purpose, after all, old Corybant!

HELLRIEGEL

[*Interrupts his ocarina playing for a few moments.*] Quite right! Get your breath for a minute, Pippa!

[HUHN *stares convulsively and with great triumph into* WANN'S *eyes. Then laboriously, but with great power, his lips utter the cry:* "Jumalaï!" *Thereupon he falls back and dies.*

HELLRIEGEL

[*Was just about to raise the ocarina to his lips.*] Why, what is that? That's so! I heard the cry yesterday morning, too! What do you say to that, old conjuror? It is after all a good thing that you have come! For otherwise we should have galloped away forever into the unknown, over knives and shards! Well, did you finally find him?

WANN

To be sure!

HELLRIEGEL

[*After a trill.*] Where did you find him?

WANN

Behind a snowdrift I found him. He was weary. He said he had too enormous a load of work. It took me a long time to persuade him. [*Pointing to* PIPPA.] And now it seems that he misunderstood me.

HELLRIEGEL

[*After a trill.*] And isn't he coming now, at least?

WANN

Did you not see him? He entered just before me!

HELLRIEGEL

I didn't see anything, to be sure, but I felt something when the old man cried out his silly foreign word, and that is still buzzing in my bones.

WANN

Do you still hear the noise of the echo outside?

HELLRIEGEL

[*Steps curiously to* HUHN.] That's so! the old club-foot is no longer stamping. I must say that a stone has fallen from my heart since the old hippopotamus is finally put into a place of safety! — I say, you evidently injured his back, didn't you? But that really wasn't necessary, although it probably saved us.

WANN

Yes, Michel, if you are saved, it could hardly have been accomplished in any other way.

HELLRIEGEL

Thank heaven, I really feel that we have won the trick. Therefore I will no longer be downcast, because the old man — he is really to be sure beyond the age for youthful pranks — because the old man perished from his belated amorousness, and cannot have what I possess. Every one for

himself and God for us all. What concern is it of mine, after all? — Pippa! Why is it anyway, that you have two lights on your shoulder, one at the right and one at the left?

WANN

[*With* PIPPA *in his arms.*] *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi!*

HELLRIEGEL

I do not understand that!

[*With head bent forward he looks for some time searchingly at* PIPPA, *who is lying limp in* WANN'S *arms.*

Ah, now the pain throbs so again in my breast! now such a feeling of impatience thrills through me again, so painfully sweet, as if I had to be at the same time on this spot and millions of years away. Everything around me is indeed rose-coloured. [*He plays, interrupts himself and says.*] Dance, child! Joy! Rejoice, for by the aid of the eternal light in my breast we have found the way through the dark labyrinth — and when you have danced to your heart's content, and are feeling calm and quiet in your secure happiness, then we will glide on at once [*to* WANN] with your permission, over the clear snow, as if by special post, down into the abyss of spring.

WANN

Yes, if you find the abyss of spring, my good Michel, certainly!

HELLRIEGEL

[*At the window, with the motions of a blind man, who looks only within.*] Ho, I see it well, the

abyss of spring! I surely am not blind! A child can see it! Why, from your cabin, you queer old inn-keeper, one can see all the land . . . over fifty miles away! I am absolutely no longer like the bottle-imp lying corked up on the bottom of the sea. That was in the past. Just give us the little key, and let us start on our journey!

WANN

When Winter suddenly flashes its light, one easily becomes blind!

HELLRIEGEL

Or attains universal vision! One might almost believe one is in a dream. The white splendour of the mountains, flaming in the morning light, and the alluring fragrance of the peninsulas, bays and gardens of the valleys have such a mysterious charm for me. And can you believe it? It is as if one were on another star!

WANN

So it is when the mountains are bathed in the St. Elmo fireworks of great Pan.

HELLRIEGEL

Pippa!

WANN

She in her turn is already far away from us on her own pilgrimage. And he, the restless, uncouth old giant, is following her. [*He lays* PIPPA *down on the bench. Then he calls.*] Jonathan! — Once more the invisible hand that reaches through walls and roofs has thwarted my plans and carried away the spoils.— Jonathan! — He is already

cold! The glowing crater has become extinct. What does the Huntsman hunt? It is not the beast that he kills! What does the Huntsman hunt? who can answer me?

HELLRIEGEL

[*At the dark window.*] Pippa, just look below, the headlands are covered with gold cupolas . . . and do you see? there is our palace by the sea — and golden steps that lead up to it!

WANN

Then rejoice! Rejoice for what you are, and for what, Michel, is concealed from you!

HELLRIEGEL

The sea! Oh, another upper sea is disclosed. This other gives back to the lower sea millions of wavering little stars! O, Pippa . . . and look! another sea is disclosed! There is an endless twinkling of mirrored lights! We are floating through it, between ocean and ocean, on our rippling gold galley!

WANN

Then you surely will no longer need my little boat! — Throw back the shutters, Jonathan!

[JONATHAN, *who has looked in, opens the house door, and the first faint light of morning penetrates into the hall.*

HELLRIEGEL

Pippa!

WANN

Here she is, take hold of each other's hands!

[*He has stepped up to* Michel, *who is standing there with the expression of a blind seer, and acts as if* Pippa *were standing beside him and he were laying* Michel's *hand in hers.*] There! I wed you! I wed you to the shade! The man who is wedded to a shade, weds you to it!

Hellriegel

That's not bad, Pippa, you are a shade!

Wann

Go forth, go forth with her into all the world . . . to your palace by the sea, I mean! — to which you have the key! The monster can no longer prevent your entrance! And outside, a sled with two curved horns stands ready. . . .

Hellriegel

[*With great tears on his cheeks.*] And there I shall turn water into balls!

Wann

You are already doing it with your eyes! — There, now go! and don't forget your ocarina!

Hellriegel

Oh, no, my sweet, beloved little wife I shall not forget!

Wann

For eventually it may be possible that you will have to play and sing here and there at people's doors, but do not on that account lose your courage. Firstly, you have the little key to the palace, and this torch, which, when it gets dark, Pippa can carry before you, and then you will surely and

truly come to where peace and joy are waiting for you. Sing and play bravely and do not despair.

HELLRIEGEL

Hurrah! I'll sing the Song of the Blind!

WANN

What do you mean by that?

HELLRIEGEL

I'll sing the song of the blind people who do not see the great golden stairs!

WANN

All the higher will you climb the *Scala d'Oro,* the *Scala de Giganti!*

HELLRIEGEL

And I'll sing the Song of the Deaf!

WANN

Who can not hear the stream of the universe flow!

HELLRIEGEL

Yes.

WANN

Do that certainly! But, Michel, if they are not softened by it and threaten you with hard words or with stones, which does sometimes happen, then tell them how rich you are . . . a prince on his travels, with his princess! Speak to them of your palace by the sea and implore them for heaven's sake to conduct you a milestone further on your way.

HELLRIEGEL

[*Giggling.*] And Pippa shall dance!

WANN

And Pippa will dance!

[*It has become quite light.* WANN *puts a stick into the hand of the blind and helpless* MICHEL, *puts his hat on his head and leads the groping man, who is softly and happily chuckling, to the outer door. Now* MICHEL *raises the ocarina to his mouth and plays a sad and heart-breaking melody. In the hall* JONATHAN *takes charge of the blind man and* WANN *comes back. He listens to the melody of the ocarina, which gradually dies away in the distance, takes the little gondola from the table, looks at it and says, in a tone of painful renunciation:* Sail away, sail away, little gondola!

CHARLEMAGNE'S HOSTAGE

A LEGENDARY PLAY

" Scrivesi adunque, che il re Carlo, il quale i Francesi col cognome di Magno agguagliano a Pompeo ed ad Alessandro, nel regno suo fervente-mente s'inamoro d'una geovane, la quale, per quanto agli occhi suoi pareva, ogni altra del regno di Francia di bellezza in quei tempi trapassava. Fu questo re di si fervente amore acceso di costei, cosi perduto, ed ebbe l'animo cosi corrotto dalle sui tenere carezze e lascivie, che non curando il danno che per tal cagione nella fama e nell'onore ricevea, ed abbandonati i pensieri del governo del regno. . . .

Le sei giornate of Sebastiano Erizzo.
XVIth Century.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

The Emperor Karl the Great.
Gersuind.
Excambald.
Alcuin.
Rorico.
Bennit.
The First Chaplain.
The Abbess.
The Sister Superior.
Nuns and pupils of the convent school.

THE FIRST ACT

The bed-chamber of KARL THE GREAT *at Aix-la-Chapelle. It is the hour before sunrise on a day of the month of wine.*

KARL, *still sitting on his bed, is being dressed by servants. Although over sixty years of age, he is erect and vigourous.* COUNT RORICO, *a handsome man of noble carriage, not over thirty years old, stands at a becoming distance awaiting the commands of the king.*

KARL

A clean shift! Pure and shining — clearly bleached!
Cool! Ah, could I thus put on a new man!
Cool too? Ah, no! Tarry a little yet
Before the last cold shirt man ever wears
Runs chilling down my limbs! Ah, my good friend!
Not yet! Good friend, still let the cere-cloth hang
In its familiar cupboard! Leave me my heart
With its old thumping and still keep that shirt
Of ice, the wretched scarecrow which receives
The worm o' the grave with stiff-limbed courtesy.
Keep him a while — that new man — keep him yet!
Thus! Cloths about my loins: the Frankish garb.
I am a Frank! Who will deny it? Free!
Or else my duty's vassal at the most!

I know it well! I am mighty? Must I prove it?
And yet quite void of power! Knead me well
That old lame leg! Where is the barber? Haste!
And now Sir Count, briefly — the affairs of state.

Rorico

[*With a touch of humour.*

My lord, the chancellries are still in great
Confusion. Excambald, the chancellor,
O'erslept the hour and now, it seems, is mad!

Karl

He sleeps away the time? The old fool who should
Be niggardly of every second's space?
If life means nothing to him, let him die!
My otter skin!

[*He is clothed in his doublet of otter skin.*

Rorico

It was his evening draught!

Karl

Doubtless! For he praised life and praised the wine!
And even love! Then slept the hours away.
Let us awake — though blind unto what end!
Stare not! Bestir yourselves, as though ye were called
To hasten on some business in this world,
Delude me into thinking I am too.

Rorico

[*Desiring merely to employ the king's mind.*

Bennit, a Saxon, lord, with a petition

Urges for weeks the warder of the gate.
In firm resolve he standeth there to-day.

KARL

Lead in that resolute man!

[RORICO *instructs one of the servants, a lad of sixteen, to summon* BENNIT. *The lad hastens zealously out.*

KARL

[*Continuing to himself.*
Saxons! 'Tis well!
An old, old tale! For three and twenty years
Daily and hourly I am served that food!
The Saxons, Saxons! There is yet no end!
Faithfulness in my vassals still to nurse
Is a most thankless business. In its use
I grow aweary as the drowsy maid
At early morning milking. Still they break
Their oath again — faithless as summer storms.
Faithless!

[*He puts his hand under his pillow and draws forth writing-tablets of wax.*

My tablets! Draw me that word — someone —
In the soft wax but with an aureole.

[*Forgetting all about him he writes, with visible effort, upon the tablets. In the meantime the chancellor* EXCAMBALD *and* RORICO *enter softly. The chancellor is not far from his eightieth year, wearing long locks like the emperor, with intellectual but fanatical features, not without traces of senile decay.*

EXCAMBALD

[*Whispers to* RORICO.

How fares he?

RORICO

"Well" would be a lie, and "ill"
No less! A strange and restless spirit broods
Over him as it does on many days.

KARL

[*Speaking aloud to himself.*

Ah, head! Where art thou, head? Quadrivium!
The seven liberal arts! First trivium —
Grammar and dialectics! Music? No!
Quadrivium and trivium: Now mark!

[*To* EXCAMBALD *as though the latter had been there from the first.*

A riddle: With whom did the Emperor Karl
Wage the severest fight of all his life?

EXCAMBALD

Doubtless . . .

KARL

Well, what?

EXCAMBALD

'Twas with the Saxons, lord!

KARL

Wrong, wiseacre! With no one but himself!

[*Making further notes.*

Quadrivium: Music!

[*Rising with a groan.*

Rorico, beware
Of age!

Rorico

Most blessèd and desirable,
An old age like to thine.

Karl

There's trivium,
Quadrivium. Wisdom of Solomon
Whose understanding unto me is given —
Not unto you! At table let the chaplain
Read me Ecclesiastes on this day.
How all is vanity, utter vanity,
That which has been and is again forever,
World without end! Men sow, and plant and reap;
Build palaces and raze them; people lands
And make them to a desert; and give wounds
And heal them; treasures find and lose them next,
And seek again and find again and lose,
And slay and love and build and breed and seek,
Reward and kiss . . . And kiss . . . hearest thou me,
Rorico? Ah? — Music! Quadrivium:
A heavenly sound cleaving the mortal noise!
Enough! Bring me my seal of Serapis!
[*With high-spirited self-irony.*
The world is wax and he who shapes it — I!

[Bennit, *a Saxon of heroic appearance, is led in by two chaplains. His attitude is one of sombre expectancy.*

Karl

[*Referring to* Bennit.
Like to a ghost upon the tree of death.
What wouldst thou?

BENNIT

Justice!

KARL

Thou art of that folk
Which from the world's beginning, as the wise
Abbot of Fulda speaketh, has been thralled
In demon's chains.

BENNIT

When abbots speak, my lord,
A true man's answer is mere silence!

KARL

Justice!
My rule is your compulsion: ye have lost
The right to justice!

BENNIT

Lead me to the king!

KARL

[*Starts, looks at him ironically. Then seriously.*
Give the petition! Take me in his stead.

THE FIRST CHAPLAIN

[*Stepping forth.*
Behold this man is Bennit, Hiddi's son,
A Saxon. Late his kinsman, Assig called —
Assig, of Amalung's blood, at Aquisgranum,
Died without consolation of the Church.
Convicted of a breach of faith and peace
Together with this Bennit, he did suffer
The sequestration of his lands between

Werra and Fulda — the forest Bochonia
Which was the common heritage of these two.

KARL

The lands were confiscate?

THE FIRST CHAPLAIN

And justly so.

BENNIT

The parson lies! True were we to the king,
Only not to the incense-brewing knave.

KARL

[*Calming the horror of the company by a gesture.*
Let be. Speak on!

BENNIT

My lord, whoever thou art,
Save me from perjury! Help me fulfill
The oath I made and open me the way
Unto the face of Karl the king himself.
[*Several among the attendants laugh.*

KARL

[*With growing impatience.*
There is no farther way. Thou art at the goal!

BENNIT

O Assig, kinsman, clearly now I read
The meaning of thy words: 'Tis easier
Through miles of ancient woods to make one's way,
Though one were stripped of axe or sword or knife,

Than through the crowd of courtiers, flatterers, priests,
To win unto the ear of Frankish Karl.

KARL

Ah, do you hear? The king, 'twould seem, grows old!
My son, speak freely! Oath is worthy oath!
Having my countenance thou hast the king's,
And lacking mine thou hast not his, in truth.

BENNIT

'Twould give three scriveners, lord, their work and pay
Merely to make a record of this saying
So oft as I have heard it.

KARL

[*With rising irritation, weightily and threateningly.*

Oath against oath!
They are of equal weight! Use thou thine hour!

EXCAMBALD

[*Softly to* BENNIT.

Man! Which of all thy hundred idols robs
Thine eyes of vision, seeing not the king!

[BENNIT, *recognising the king, stares at him pale and in consternation.*

THE FIRST CHAPLAIN

[*In a businesslike tone.*

Item: the man's petition pleadeth that
He be . . .

KARL

Silence, chaplain!

[*To* BENNIT.

But do thou speak!

BENNIT

[*With resolute determination.*

Sire, Gersuind, my brother's daughter, his,
Assig's who died here at Aix-la-Chapelle
Poor! Gersuind was snatched away from him
As hostage, as our lands were taken, not
In justice, but at wild despotic choice!
This child for whom her father grieved and grieved —
Thou art a father! Grieved more bitterly
Than for his heritage or the bitter breach
Of justice! Bitterer! This child succumbs
Unto its cold tormentors!

KARL

[*Attentively.*

Gersuind?
Who is Gersuind? Where have I heard that name?
Tell thy tale straight, and do not fear at all.
Thy brother Assig sought for justice here,
If I heard right, and also for his daughter —
Justice and daughter were refused to him.
Since torment cannot touch unbodied right,
Speak of the daughter who can suffer it.
Where dwells she? Who are her tormentors? Speak!

EXCAMBALD

[*Stepping forth.*

Two words, my lord, before thou question more.

Gersuind, this Assig's daughter, is in charge
Of the convent on the lea. And were it true
As it is basely false, that she is tortured,
Then were the pious ladies of our cloister,
Which God forbid, themselves her torturers.
And all who know these reverend sisters, know
This accusation as a brood of lies.
Nay! Gersuind — well enough I know the child —
Is, as the sisters have reported to me,
How shall I speak it? Her ways are wild! That's it!
She is . . . how do we call it . . . well, perhaps:
No goodly fruit, rather what we may call
Worm-eaten . . . and corrupted at the core.

BENNIT

Lord, this man with his white beard may revile
My race and Assig's. No man bids him cease.
He is thy chancellor and we — are Saxons.

[KARL *remains unmoved. The attendants show signs of horror at* BENNIT's *boldness.*

EXCAMBALD

No man revileth here unless it be
The stranger standing there. For I have put
A fairer face than just upon this thing.
Why clamourest thou upon us with Gersuind,
Pushing thy way even to the royal seat,
And gnashing still that name into our ears?
Weightier matters press upon us here!
She is in goodly training! Give us peace!

BENNIT

Thou call'st it training!

EXCAMBALD

Ay! Goodly discipline
And seemly after sacred Christian wise.

BENNIT

I am not timid, though I foam not wild
In wrath. And yet my very blood rebels.
I speak of bloody stripes and not of care,
Of cruelty and not of discipline.
My lord, I am not mad, I do not rage!
Cause have I to be patient. Look, of late
The driven child sought refuge in my house,
And her white body showed the bloody thongs:
A child, in Christian care, in Christian wise
Mangled and tortured.

EXCAMBALD

Christian, be obedient!

BENNIT

Whom shall the child obey? Speak swiftly!

EXCAMBALD

God!

BENNIT

And that same God of yours desires — nay, nay,
There is no god would have a child reply
With beggarly subservience when men
Revile her father and her mother — nay,
No Saxon god nor any Frankish god.

KARL

[*Very quietly.*

My lords, I have instructed the good sisters
Upon the lea — I speak with due respect!

Spite of the shaking of thy locks, Excambald . . .
Spite of it, I suspect most grievously
That they, with holiest purpose, doubtlessly,
Are oft uncertain of the way of right.
Especially . . .

Excambald

[*Involuntarily exclaiming.*
Nay, lord!

Karl

[*Continuing with quiet emphasis.*
Especially
They err at times in care of hostages.
They touch, it seems, with harsh hand often that
Which should be left untouched — as I commended —
And others wiser with me! With rude grasp
They open deep wounds, difficult to heal,
In souls that from their native earth are torn,
And from their parents, from their kinsmen, friends,
And from the altars of their . . . call them . . . idols,
Even though it be to fairer life with God.
Mild should the urging be, gentle! And patient
The governing! Less command and more persuasion
Should lead these souls unto their only weal.
And thus . . .

Excambald

[*Unable to control himself.*
Nay, like a dog unto its vomit
The heathenish brood creeps back to hellish rites

Of all abomination, unless thong
And lash and stick and fist perform their work.
And so . . .

KARL

[*Again taking up the thread of his discourse with calm persistence.*

And so lead me the abbess in,
And also, as this matter's crux — the hostage.

[*At this moment appears, as though at* KARL'S *call, the venerable abbess of the convent on the lea. She leads* GERSUIND *by the hand and is accompanied by several nuns.* GERSUIND *is not yet sixteen years old. Her loose blond hair reaches almost to the ground.*

THE ABBESS

[*A little out of breath through the haste which she has used to forestall the complaints of* BENNIT.

My lord, we are here!

KARL

[*Astonished.*

Ah!

THE ABBESS

Sister Barbara
Came breathless to us. For she had been called
To service in the palace, watching o'er
The chamberlain . . . nay, rather, I should say,
The chamberlain's daughter who lies pitifully,
God help her, racked by fever. Thus she came —
Barbara, with the message that Bennit

Who sore oppresses us for months and months —
Poor suffering, helpless women that we are,
At last had made his way unto thy throne.
At once I called Gersuind! She slept, and still
Slumber is in her eye. The Saviour spake:
Watch, for innumerable are the snares
Of Satan! We are here, my lord, are here
Unworthy accusations to oppose.

[Gersuind *has become aware of* Bennit, *hastens to him, takes refuge in his arms and, apparently in wild joy at seeing him again, kisses his bearded mouth.*

Bennit

Gaze thither!

Karl

[*Lets his glance rest long and in mild astonishment upon* Gersuind.
It is thou? Thou art Gersuind!

Bennit

Ay, lord.

Karl

[*As before.*
'Tis true! 'Tis true! That was thy name.
[*He turns to* The Abbess.
Am I to understand, your reverence, then,
That this is she?

The Abbess

Ay, lord.

Karl

Thou knowest me still.

[Gersuind *nods her head in affirmation and* Karl *continues.*

Rorico, thou must know that one day, late,
My weakness leading me, I gave myself
An idle hour. My poor old scholar's head
Had nearly burst against the grammar rules.
And thus, escaping from it all, in test
Of learning to the cloister on the lea
I hied and played the master in its school.
An oracle I stood before the scholars.
But from the frying-pan into the fire
Is a brief step; my pride went to its fall!
For without hesitation Gersuind knew
More than I know to-day or yet have known
Or in eternity am like to learn.
Had not a lovely radiance blinded me,
Like flashing sickles in the moon of Spring
Or young men's swords in battle — easily
Envy and anger had devoured me straight.
And now: What is't with her? What has occurred?

The Abbess

She fled, was guilty of the unheard of, lord,
Basely repaying beneficence and love
And all our patient care; the intercessions
That rose to Heaven, at every hour for her,
The long day through. Such were her thanks!
She fled!
Wringing my hands thou seest me here. The grief
By her inflicted breaks my very heart.
How did I merit that? She would not hear
The Saviour's invitation soft, but follows
The first voice summoning her from the abyss!

KARL

Be calm, most venerable lady! Tell,
If so it please thee, how and when she fled.

THE ABBESS

'Twas not because we punished her with stripes:
No stripes she showed until that she returned.
Dread rumours are abroad of adamitic
Conspiracies — she denies, denies them not —
Horrors that carry on a hidden life,
Despite stern punishment, along the Rhine.
But how and in what way she fled from us . . .

[*Growing more and more tearful* THE ABBESS *has finally lost self-control. The senior sister, administrator of the convent, resolutely takes up the thread of the narrative.*

THE SISTER SUPERIOR

Permit me. Down the trellis vines she crept
Straight into our great mallow bed at night.
I may not tell you how the girl was clad.
She crossed the yard, climbed up the wall, and dropped
Smooth down the trunk of a great tree. And there
A watchman saw her and called out to her.
Her teeth flashed —'tis his tale — she screeched like to
A bat infernal. Fear did grasp him; he
Restrained her not; may God forgive his sin.

EXCAMBALD

Be brief and speak the truth I taught ye! Here
'Tis wisdom to place mirrors round about,

That his own image slay the basilisk.
Do this — ye gain the truth. There was a woman,
Who, fifteen years ago, received the fruit
Of her strange womb by Asmodeus' grace,
And to its father dedicated it.
This woman was her mother! Gaze at her!
Or rather, do not gaze at all! There is
That in her eye makes mirrors dim and dark.
Consider what our lord and emperor Karl
Speaks in her praise: knowledge and understanding
Unchildlike that confused the mighty king
And lord o' the world.— Thou, Cousin abbess, too
Art cured to-day! Thou also stood'st within
The power and circle of her evil magic,
Giving me proofs of her wild, agile mind!
Have we not waged for thirty years grim war
Upon the Saxon folk? Do ye believe
Their evil gods are idle, do not plot
Daily and nightly how they may destroy
God's empire and the empire's holy Church?

Bennit

Can you behold the demon in her face
Conjuring storms in forest-clearings dim?
Lord, set her free! She is a lark and not
A raven, servant of the raven god!
Famishing innocent in a narrow cave,
What wonder that she beats her guiltless wings?
She scents the beech-tree tops, the forest free,
The golden stag of heaven whose antlers ring
Wild morning music in the groves of dawn.
She would come back to me and home, would see
Her brothers and her playmates; from the court
Clinging to her mare's back, she would fly forth,

And hurry through the valleys to the hunt,
With tresses streaming in the azure air!
Then will we keep again the holy days,
And be right true to Jesus and to Karl.
But ye, good women, tame a beast that was
Born in captivity and knows naught else.
The free-born spirit ye will never tame.

Karl

[*Having let his glance linger long and thoughtfully, now upon* Bennit, *now upon* Gersuind, *says in a tone of complete calm to* Bennit.

Give back the child!

Bennit

[*In consternation.*

How, lord?

Karl

[*Quietly but with the unanswerable decision of the ruler.*

The maid remains
In your good care, my ladies of the lea,
But ye will give me stronger surety
For her safe-keeping than before. Bennit
Shall leave the city. Ere a new day dawns,
Bennit, thou art beyond Aix-la-Chapelle,
Or feelest grim the executioner's sword.
As for the lands in matter of which thou
Art pleading in our courts of justice here,
A strict accounting is assured to thee
And ultimate right. Return unto thy canton
In peace and wait for our decision there.

Bennit

Farewell, Gersuind! Go willingly! For still
Are visible upon thy tender skin
The harsh marks of the fists that rudely tore
Thee from me when of late to me thou cam'st.
Go! I am helpless: I am void of hope!
Bear it as best thou canst. My strength is spent.

[*He loosens himself from* Gersuind, *who clings to him with soft moaning, and hastens out. The* Sister Superior *and the other nuns surround* Gersuind. *A gesture of* Karl *causes* Rorico *to urge the women to depart. At the same moment the chaplain and the servants withdraw.*

Excambald

[*Takes up a waxen tablet that depends from his girdle.*

Now that this matter of small moment has
Been well decided by the judgment sure
Of thrice-proved wisdom, it remains to think
Of duty. The undone calls for the deed.
Firstly, thou didst desire to stay that crime
O' the Romans, that repulsive shame and sin
Which culminates in selling Christian men
As bond-slaves to the heathen Saracens.—
Also, thou didst desire to inspect the marshes.
There has been brought in from thy royal farms
The apple harvest which thou didst desire
To see, also the bailiffs. Messengers
From Styria . . .

Karl

Enough! Forget not! Later!

EXCAMBALD

Pepin, thy son . . .

KARL

Later! Leave me alone.

[EXCAMBALD, *disconcerted, steps aside with a scarcely noticeable shaking of the head and retires.*

KARL

[*Suddenly and emphatically.*

Rorico!

RORICO

[*Entering swiftly.*

My lord?

KARL

'Tis well! What would I have?
'Tis true! Call in my daughters! Nay, I would
Go hunting but with thee! Then to the baths.
The day grows dim.

RORICO

'Tis clear and sunny, lord!

KARL

[*Lost in thought.*

Pure as the moon, as a saint's countenance.
Sawest thou this child for the first time?

RORICO

Ah . . . nay . . .

KARL

Where didst thou see her?

Rorico

I? I? . . . Scarcely I
Can tell just in what place I saw the maid.
Perhaps I err and never saw her yet.

Karl

Rorico, friend, this glance of mine which oft
Grows dull with too much gazing — oh, I have seen
Far, far too much with these twin eyes of mine
Which from my youth have served me without rest —
Well, when this glance alights upon some crown,
As this same child's that we saw here to-day,
A soothing comes upon it; it melts and grows
Young in delighting in its pasture blond
And thaws the frozen heart within my breast.
Is't clear to thee?

Rorico

Almost, my lord — almost!

Karl

Almost? Let be! 'Twill prove enough! Nay, more
Is wanted, understand me quite, for that
Rorico, do I keep thee at my side.
This blond grass on the heads of children, spun
Of threads of delicate gold — is't not the woof
Of innocence? Is it not wonderful?

Rorico

Gladly I grant that she is exquisite.
And yet . . .

Karl

[*Swiftly.*
A coxcomb give unto the fool

Who, like our chancellor Excambald, can do —
In face of so much loveliness and youth —
Naught but with broad mouth void his venom forth.
God keep me from such base senility!
Hast any news?

Rorico

The elders and the priests
Of Jewry do petition me they would
Begin the building of their synagogue,
And Excambald delays yet to decide
In matter of the ground not yet allotted.

Karl

How is thy mistress?

Rorico

[*Frightened.*
Who? May God protect me!
I know naught of a mistress!

Karl

Knowest naught?
Thou gallows' bird, thou knowest naught of Judith?

Rorico

Judith? Ah, if thou meanest Judith . . .

Karl

Surely!

Rorico

If she should learn the sacred majesty
Our lord and king did graciously recall
Her being, then her utter glow would burst
High into flame.

KARL

The more hast thou to quench!
Ah, were I young once more, Rorico, young!
I'd give . . . all my white hair — in fee therefor!
[*With some hesitation.*
And listen, Rorico: my plan is . . . this . . .
Guess what it is! Not by the help of gods
Heathen and old, Grimoald of whom 'tis said
That he contaminates our springs with poison.
My plan concerns . . .

RORICO

The synagogue?

KARL

Not so!
Thou art wrong. My plan is this. I tell it thee . . .
For though I need no silent chancellor,
Being strong enough to rule a chattering one:
Yet on this day I'd see him not again.
And now: A secret business! It is this:
I have determined in my soul to play
The part of fortune in this maiden's life.
For she is pitiable with those wide eyes,
Helpless before her exile's misery.
A whim, if so thou please! Let her be free!
Her cage I'll open. But if I do so
Perchance a cruel hawk would straight swoop down
And pierce her beyond cure. This may not be!
Hence, face to face, I'd test her soul and strive
To learn wherein she may be truly served.
Hast thou my meaning?

Rorico

[*Astonished.*

Ay, lord.

Karl

Hasten then,
Before my morning mood doth pass away.

Rorico

And the command? What is it?

Karl

Haste thee swift
And coming hither, with thee bring Gersuind.
Bring her alone. Let there be no one else.
Nor any outcry! This being smoothly done,
Doubly refreshed I'll hasten to the hunt.

[*Upon a small table of silver, servants bring in the breakfast of* Karl; *others bring water in a silver jug and a silver ewer. A chaplain brings in a manuscript which he places upon a reading-desk and opens.* Rorico *bows and withdraws. A pupil of the court-school, a lad of sixteen, takes up his station near the emperor with tablets and stylus.* Karl *sits down at the little table, water is poured over his hands. The chaplain clears his throat in preparation for the reading.*

Karl

[*Silencing the chaplain with a gesture.*
Read not to-day about the City of God.

[*The chaplain bows and withdraws.* Karl *begins to eat.*

KARL

Ha, boy, speak! Did the ceiling once again
Crackle as thou didst tell me yestereve?
And are the palace walls about to burst
Ere Gottfried, the wild Dane, shall lay it waste?
What murmur the prophets? Are the king's days
numbered?
They are! Even as theirs, even as thine,
And as each hair upon thy dullard's head!
Patience! Note this: Karl, emperor of the
Franks,
Grew old and young again an hundred times
In his long life, and will not die for roofs
That crackle or omens — only when God wills!

[RORICO *leads in* GERSUIND *who is talking to him. She is not as on her first appearance, but shows a childlike boldness and gaiety. So soon as she hears the voice of* KARL *she assumes an attentive attitude.*

KARL

[*Not wholly without embarrassment.*
This was an excellent thought in thee, to come
And to confide thy woes to me alone.
Even Rorico seems but superfluous now.
Tell me thy wishes and thy sorrows, then
Can we take council for some goodly change.

[*At his gesture all but* GERSUIND *withdraw.*

KARL

Speak without hesitation now, Gersuind.

GERSUIND

[*With an earnest but stealthily watchful glance.*

I would be free!

KARL

'Tis well! Thy longing tends
Toward thy homeland, to the forests where
Upon the trunk of the mysterious beech
Still Freya's image hangs,— mother of death —
And not our Lady Mary's — mother of God!
And thou wouldst go to thy rough kinsman, too.

GERSUIND

I would be free, too, of his guardianship!

KARL

What? In his arms thine eyes shed tears!

GERSUIND

[*Shrugging her shoulders.*

I wept. Ay. For I would not wound his heart.
Besides . . .

KARL

Speak boldly! What besides?

GERSUIND

Besides, when old men weep, I must weep too,
Else must I fear to laugh at the quaint sight.

KARL

[*Pushing the table from him.*

What sayest thou?

GERSUIND

I speak the truth. Naught else.

KARL

[*Calm again.*

My child . . . yet when I think of what thou spak'st,
And the strange way of it — and turn my face
Aside from thee and see thee not at all —
Thee, who stands there — then do I hear a voice
That is like no child's voice in all the world.

GERSUIND

[*With a meaning glance.*

I can be silent, too, King Karl!

KARL

[*Seems scarcely to trust his senses; then swiftly and sharply.*

Nay, speak!
And be not shy but utter thy heart's thoughts.

GERSUIND

[*Frankly.*

Shyness? Timidity? What would I gain
In this brief life of mine which all men seem
To grudge me, which to-morrow morn, perchance,
Will glide away from me, did I feel those?

KARL

And dost thou know who 'tis that speaks to thee?

GERSUIND

Thou art an old man; that I know. Thy life
Stretches its years behind thee. As for me,
What does my past hold? Very little . . . naught!
My future? Not much more, perhaps! Thou art
Satiated and canst understand me not.

KARL

How knowest thou old men are not hungry too?

GERSUIND

Oh, yea, thou art hungry. One can see it well,
Can see it in thine eyes; for old men's eyes
Hurt one, beseeching like to beaten curs,
Or like the eyes of drowning men!

KARL

[*With enforced humour.*
Enough!
Yet lives no mightier swimmer in this world
Than emperor Karl, unborn is yet that hand
That reaches beyond his, unborn that head
Before which his shall bow! His glances hurt!
In sooth they do when that his anger kindles
As lightning flashes from a sombre heaven!
Be brief! What wouldst thou have me do for thee?

GERSUIND

Let me but live according to my mood. . . .

KARL

How would that be?

GERSUIND

To go my ways alone
Nor owe an answer unto any man
Who questions me my whither or my whence.

KARL

That is a strange wish at thy years, my child.
Thou knowest not, in very truth, its purport.
The air is full of dangers. If there fly
A small and golden bird, such as thou art,

Once, twice above the puddles that are life —
And notably here in my capital —
Straight is it slain by gorgeous birds of prey.
I would not thy destruction. Nay, I would
Confer some kindness on thee. Pray for that!

GERSUIND

I have naught else to ask save this same thing.

KARL

'Tis well. Tell no one else but me alone:
What is the purpose of that liberty.

GERSUIND

To do the thing that seems most merry to me.

[KARL *arises and strikes his fist against a disk of metal suspended between the columns of his chamber. At the sound* RORICO *appears.*

KARL

This blond will o' the wisp, friend Rorico,
This half-mad child — is free! She goes from hence
Whither she would, no more a hostage now,
In no man's care, nor in the convent's guard.
Let no man train her, no man bid her halt,
Or cross her way, whatever way she take:
And though upon the edge of the abyss,
Blind and unwarned she stood! She is not the last
Who with the boundless heaven of her youth
Takes the last plunge into the deeps of hell.

[KARL *goes without turning back.* GERSUIND *observes him with a scurrilous ex-*

pression until he is gone. Rorico *alone with her, approaches her, seriously, almost harshly.*

Rorico

Whither away?

Gersuind

[*In a passionate whisper.*
Thou art handsome! Take me with thee!

Rorico

[*After a brief pause of astonishment.*
Ay, as one carries small snakes, tightly wedged
Within the cleavage of a hazel twig,
That they may thrust not forth their tongue nor sting!
Come, little demon! Leave the emperor's house!
[*Grasping the edge of her garment at her throat, he holds her far away from him and pushes her out.*

THE SECOND ACT

A country-seat of the emperor KARL *in the neighbourhood of Aix-la-Chapelle. An open colonnade with an entrance door to the house which gives on the garden. Broad stairs lead down to the garden. The ancient trees are yellow in their autumnal foliage. The background represents a sunny slope planted with vine. It is a clear morning of Autumn. Several days have passed since the events of the first act. The chancellor* EXCAMBALD *walks excitedly up and down between the columns.* COUNT RORICO *comes from the house and joins him.*

EXCAMBALD

[*Eagerly.*

Well, count?

RORICO

Your Excellency, it is vain.

EXCAMBALD

So he will not receive me? Once again?
Affairs are urgent! He will see me not!
They heap themselves to mountains. He is deaf.
Am I not longer in his favour? Well!
Ill, I would say, but there's no help for it.
His confidence I never have abused,

And thus, with an unburdened soul, I may
Roll off the weight on other shoulders now.
But some one must support it, my lord count,
If not the course o' the world shall go awry.
What is it? Declare it freely! Speak the truth!

Rorico

Naught can I say except protest once more
That I know naught. Hither the emperor fled,
Or almost fled. He sees no man at all,
Nor speaks to any, and himself is dumb.
Is lost in thought, plays with his dogs or gives
Fresh green to the young deer or catches else
The lizards. When one day to him I spake:
The wild steed o' the world runs bridleless,
He gave me as an answer: Let it run,
No one will lose much if it run away.

Excambald

I cannot be contented with all this.
Thou seek'st to satisfy my anxious mind
In kindly wise. But this is not enough.
If thou art well disposed unto me, count,
Prove me that kindness by declaring straight
The very day on which I, ill-advised,
In matter of council to our sovereign lord
Failed the right way and the right tone to find.

Rorico

Perchance in matter of the Saxon hostage.

Excambald

Hold there! A hostage? Hostage? Help me think!

Rorico

Hold it as nothing, as it is, good lord.
A mind so full of very great affairs
May hold the little as of little worth.
Yet in the mind of the great Karl himself —
That ruling mind in which there brood great things,
Greater than in another mortal soul —
This trivial matter has put forth deep roots
And like a noxious weed spreads over all.

Excambald

Explain thyself! Thou mean'st

Rorico

Think of Gersuind!

Excambald

God's blood! I had my thoughts! This is, dear count,
The proper moment for enlightenment:
Gersuind! What is the question of this child?

Rorico

There is none save that she absorbs his soul.

Excambald

And in what sense does she absorb his soul?

Rorico

It would be better to ask wiser men.
Perchance Alcuin, the sage from Britain, may
Give thee a clearer answer than can I.

Excambald

These are mere subterfuges, count. 'Tis certain
That thou must know this one thing: For what cause

The Saxon hostage whom but now the king
Seemed to befriend, was bidden to fare forth
A helpless wanderer, why the good sisters
Coming to plead for her were not admitted,
The maiden, with an alien cruelty,
Being driven out into the dark of night.

Rorico

The world's great lord at times has merry moods!
And if he thrust her forth to be the prey
Of beasts —'twas at her own beseeching done.
Forgive me, lord, I hear his steps approach.

Excambald

The first man in the empire, save its lord,
Laden with the imperial cares and burdens,
Must flee his presence like a thief at night.

[*He hastens out. Soon thereafter* Karl *enters, in country garb, a garden knife in his hand, upright and commanding. He has come from the leafy garden paths. He has the air of a great, noble, wild animal that scents danger. As he recognises* Rorico *he approaches slowly and without looking at him.* Rorico's *attitude is one of quiet expectancy.*

Karl

[*Close by* Rorico, *holding out some chestnut leaves.*

Lovest thou the bitter fragrance of the leaves,
Rorico?

Rorico

Ay, but not when fields are full
Of multitudes of yellow primroses.

KARL

Thou egg!

RORICO

Is that a title thou wouldst lend
Unto my greatness, my dear lord?

KARL

Ay, that —
As well as youngster, whipper-snapper, boy!

RORICO

I bear these honours, though they are undeserved,
With patience. Only the last seems not unjust
When I behold the countenance of him
Who is the ruler of the mighty world.

KARL

A little reverence will harm thee not,
Nor me, my son. So it be not too much!
Else do ye forge me fast unto my throne,
And solder my poor head into the crown,
And, in the end, might undertake to feed me
Like the idol in Byzantium, with prayers.
I am no god; my duty 'tis to honour
God, like the lowest hind of all my folk,
For like that hind I am weary, hungry, thirsty
In season due, and sinful as thyself.—
A riddle! Rede it! What mean I by this?
Open thine eyes! It stands beside thee there,
Yet not beside. Thou drivest it forth! It flees,
And in its fleeing draws thee after it.
And thou wouldst seize it — it escapes; wouldst
shake it
From thee — and closer to thy heart it clings;
Thou'dst sere it — the more wildly burns it thee!

Thou'dst plunge it in an icy sea — behold,
The ice takes fire — the ice of sixty winters
Bursts, melts, glows, soars into a living flame!
It is no riddle, friend; it is a sickness.

Rorico

[*After a silent pause.*

My duty is most clearly this — to call
A wise physician hither, if thou art
In any way, in mind or body, ill.
Command me to call Winter, thy physician.

Karl

And must a man be sick who speaks of sickness?
And were I sick in very truth, this Winter,
As the white snow upon my head may teach thee,
Is not the proper man to heal my ill.
Enough of riddles! What are the news at court,
Over there, by the Rhine?

Rorico

The head is wanting,
And hence the limbs are without governance.

Karl

Well, let them wriggle, and the head have rest.

Rorico

Ambassadors are waiting; messages
Of threatening tone come from the Danish king.
The chancellor beseeches for an audience.

Karl

Oh, let the Danish braggart threaten, let
The noise not buzz about my ears awhile.

But let me cut ripe clusters of the grape.
Thus once the prince of the Avari swore
In iron armour to ride over me,
And many another with him who thereafter
Crept through the yoke that I held out for him,
So that to gain the domination due
I had no duty but stand firm and still.
Unprofitable 'tis to rule, to conquer,
To oppose one's shield to weaklings or to hold it
Protectingly above them! Take good care
That no man make his entrance past our guards.
Now tell me — and then leave me, for I would
Be quite alone — canst thou recall what was
The fate of that young hostage — thou remember-
est —
Whom five days since I bade thee bring to me?
It was the daughter of a rebel Saxon. . . .
Did she return unto her cloister soon?

RORICO

[*After a brief hesitation.*

Nay, lord!

KARL

Nay?

RORICO

Nay!

KARL

So she is out i' the world?

RORICO

Unto the cloister she did not return.

KARL

All things were done as I had planned them for
her?

RORICO

To the letter! She was given garments, bread,
And wine and yellow gold upon her way,
And the assurance that the convent's gates
Were ever open against her return.

KARL

So that in going, Rorico, she had —
This is the point — the extreme certainty,
That, whether by night or day, at any hour,
Her coming back would be most welcome?

RORICO

Ay,
She had!

KARL

And still she came not yet?

RORICO

Not yet!

KARL

Then farewell, folly! Rest thy bones in peace! . . .
Ere I forget it, let the spears be brought!
And let us hurl them at the target disk.
Close is my doublet for my breast which swells
So mightily that it could shatter steel.
Rorico, come, behold — is not mine arm
As firm and sinewy as any? Wrinkles
There are i' the face — my vision is undimmed!

[*At a beckoning gesture of* RORICO *huntsmen have emerged from the bushes, carrying spears.* KARL *receiving one of the spears, continues.*

Give me the spear and I will hit the heart
O' the target, bravely as thyself and well.

Only when a young woman comes to me,
The ghost of age torments me; it coughs and wheezes
Beside me, creeps beneath my coverlet
At night with icy touch and threatening
To turn me from below into cold stone.
Into cold stone, gradually, inch by inch,
My living body! Rorico, dost thou hear?
Let be! The ghost goes and king Karl remains.
His left leg, to be sure, is turned to stone,
But not his good right arm and not his heart.
Die, hag of eld!

[*Mightily he hurls the spear.*

Thus shall my motto run!

Rorico

[*Standing by the target which has been set up in the meantime and in the centre of which sticks the spear of* Karl.

A mighty throw! The spear sits in the core
And, trembling, lauds its master.

Karl

[*Swiftly.*

Is she dead?

Rorico

Who?

Karl

If that saint be dead I'd have thee tell.

Rorico

A saint? I know of none.

Karl

Her whom a demon

Bade me destroy for the voluptuous game
Of cruelty.

Rorico

She lives!

Karl

She lives?

Rorico

Ay, lord,
Only, unhappily, she is no saint.

Karl

Come hither, Rorico, here is a place
On purpose made for youngsters who, like us,
Have 'scaped from school to think of merriment.
Come and report to me: How dwells she? Where?
Plucked like a bird? Dishevelled? Frightened?

Rorico

Nay.

Karl

Empty thy wallet, friend! Give what thou hast!
I am thy guest; spare me the need of prayer
And questioning! There passes through my soul,
A radiant little cloud; a balmy rain
Falls there — the rain that makes the brooks to flow,
The fields to put forth flowers, in every bush
The throstles to make music. So she lives!
A trivial life and almost without worth —
The sickles of my reapers year by year
Touch lives of higher moment — but my heart

In wayward stubbornness doth praise high Heaven
For that this poor child's heart is beating still,
And did not to my harsh command succumb.

Rorico

Then I shall speak the truth. For, since I mark
That the unheard of favour of my lord
Is given to unworthiness extreme,
Truth grows a double duty. Gersuind, then,
The Saxon hostage whom thy kindness holds
As foolish, froward and yet innocent,
Is rich in frowardness and folly, ay!
But richer still in sin! 'Tis true, I saw
Never delusion equal, never yet
So strange a counterfeit of purity.
Men would surmise the holy wafer laid
Upon those seeming saintly lips of hers
Would blossom forth and in the spotless shrine
Of innocence endure a thousand years.
The lustral radiance of that forehead white
Is naught but poison, horror and destruction.
Sire . . .

Karl

Softly, friend! Tell it me gradually!
For very new and thorny is the path,
Go slowly. If she is a sinner then,
An Irmintrud, as saith our chancellor,
Then tell me — judgment being my office here —
What is the member wherewith she offends?

Rorico

Wherewith she offends? There is one virtue which
Should scarcely be a virtue at her years;
There is a vice — the vice that feeds and fattens

Ever upon the grave of chastity,
In insolent lewdness. I have named her sin.

KARL

'Tis well. And whence hast thou that knowledge won?

RORICO

The greater part even from her own lips.

KARL

Aha, Count Rorico, I crave thy pardon. . . .

RORICO

Put thou me not to shame! What should I pardon?
Whatever thou in the long course of years
With boundless favour still forgavest me,
Yet in this matter am I free of guilt.
For she pursued me — I am frank — she clung
Closer to me the more I thrust her back.
She gave no peace, and yet, much as I am
A man like other men — there came o'er me
A strong revulsion, more: there came a fear!
Strange seemed her nature, potent in strange ways,
So strange I could not take what she would give!

KARL

[*Turning pale.*

Then look straight at me, Rorico!

RORICO

[*Frankly and fearlessly.*

My lord?

KARL

And tell me further.

RORICO

I do grant a man
Doing what I have done seems quaint enough.
I have braved mightier storms for lesser charms.
I am neither saint nor coward. Yet, although,
Naught remained here to spare and naught to conquer
Except perchance her clinging to one's neck
So madly that a fray would gain one's freedom —
I yet remained what in these delicate matters
A man is loth to be — a hero!

KARL

Farther!

RORICO

And this one thing happened but yestereve.
The hoar frost, as thou knowest, fell at night,
And lay until the sun of morning rose. . . .
In short, I picked her up but yestereve;
Or, to speak truth, 'twas she caught sight of me,
And called to me and then ran after me
Unto the threshold of the garden house
Where I dismounted.

KARL

So behind thy horse
The child ran?

RORICO

Three long miles. To gallop swift
I urged my steed. She flew along with it.

KARL

Her soles are wingèd, then?

Rorico

My lord, she is
Swift as a hind before the hunter's pack,
An agile runner, light incredibly.
Yet pity came to me at last. I called:
Whom dost thou follow, wench? Thee, came the answer.
And I returned: Satan much more than me!
Thee, only thee! Nay, but the carrion
I cried, of lust,— then brought my horse to stand.
Thou wilt break down, I said, and thou wilt fare,
Thy wild heart breaking, in thy very sin
Thither where is no breathing any more!

Karl

And she?

Rorico

Laughed wildly, shrilly, piercingly
As laughs the woodpecker. Away with thee!
I roared, into thy cloister! Else creep back
Into that ditch and gathering place of whores
Whither my horse itself with shuddering
Bore me, its nostrils trembling, and where I
God help us, picked thee up.

Karl

Thou wert not kind,
Nor very gentle with her, friend.

Rorico

Not delicate
With her, my lord, nor truly with myself.
Yet would I strike her not nor let her lie
In the cold fields; and thus, my anger spent,

In memory of the good Samaritan,
I even wrapped her in my cloak and brought
Her hither. And the old man at the gate
Holding my horse, seeing us muffled, strange,
Did cross himself!

KARL

Where came ye?

RORICO

Hither!

KARL

Where?

RORICO

To the old steward at the garden gate.

KARL

And so she is . . .

RORICO

More is the pity, here.
She is in the vintner's keeping at this hour,
And quartered in the cottage by the wall.

[KARL *rises, looks at* RORICO *long and steadfastly and then breaks out into laughter that has a touch of morbidity in it.*

KARL

And thus thou garnishest a wild exploit,
Rorico, and incomparable madness?
Thou usest many words! Was it for this
I give the little bird its freedom back
That thy rude bolt rest in its plumage soft?
Almost, Sir count, this breaks the patience of

My magnanimity! Rothraut, my daughter
Desires, as thou knowest better far than I
To make this court the abode of purity.

Rorico

It hurts me that thou shouldst misjudge so harshly
Thy servant.

Karl

Me that thou shouldst so abuse
The object of my kindness — then revile it!
But say no more. What happened is my fault.
Yet that I heap no further guilt upon me,
I will obey the providential call
Which took thee as its instrument; will summon
The child to me and see her once again.
Thus I will test anew if wisdom weighed
In the exactest balance, joined to might,
May heal the ill a swift command has done.
I see thee start! Ah, hast thou never heard
Of one who from the brothel leapt into
The favour of a king? This is my whim:
Let her be brought into the garden where
The bushes meet the beds. Let her know naught.
Let her be left there without guidance. I
Will meet her there as though it were by chance.

[Rorico *withdraws with a bow.* Karl *remains standing, lost in thought for a space. Then he lets his glance wander about to discover whether he be alone. He notices the two huntsmen who, at a distance, await his commands.*

Karl

The spears away!

[*The huntsmen draw the spear from the target and carry both away.*

Who kneeleth, huntsman, there
Beside the box-tree near the gardener's house?

First Huntsman

A child.

Karl

Is it the gardener's granddaughter?

First Huntsman

The gardener's granddaughter? Perhaps! But she
Has raven hair and this child's locks are bright.

Karl

Discover who she be! Nay! Go! Enough!

[*The huntsmen withdraw. The loud laughter of* Gersuind *is heard. The* Emperor *grows pale, stands unmoved and gazes steadily in the direction whence* Gersuind *presently appears chasing a butterfly. She comes very near* Karl *without appearing to notice him.*

What dost thou here?

Gersuind

[*With a soft cry.*

I am catching butterflies!

Karl

Where and upon whose land doest thou that?

Gersuind

Methinks 'tis Rorico's, the count of Maine.

KARL

Thou deemest Rorico, the count of Maine,
Is master here?

GERSUIND

I know not. Rothraut, perhaps.
It little matters whether it be she,
The emperor's daughter, or her lover else
Who weeds the beds and plants the bushes here.
They have not counted their white butterflies
Nor those of darker hue; whom will it hurt
If of one lizard I the garden rob?

[*At this moment she begins chasing a lizard. The chase seems to preoccupy her wholly.*

KARL

Evil for thee, were my thoughts like to thine.
Now, if it may be, turn to me thy glance:
For the third time thou seest me to-day.
Recall! The old man with the look of one
Drowning, who gave thy freedom unto thee —
'Tis he still breathing, still unwhelmed, who crosses
Thy path once more to-day. It may well be
That his old eyes do hurt thee less this hour,
That a strong hand more welcome is than when
Thou knewest not what freedom held in store?

GERSUIND

Hush! Look! How pretty is the little beast!

KARL

Ay, it is true, Gersuind. Yet he who stands
Before thee is not wont to address his words
Unto deaf ears. And at this moment I
Would counsel thee to hold such deafness folly.

I did thee wrong; for it was I, it was
The ruler's whim that thrust thee down so deep
Into the noisome depths which well I knew
Unclean and full of scurrying evil things.
And so to-day I stretch out my right hand
To draw thee to the light from out that deep
Corruption which thy knowledge measures now.
Dost understand?

GERSUIND

[*Laughing.*
By Irmin's gold, I do not.

KARL

Gersuind, how darest thou? The stubborn folk
That gave thee birth with all thy senses wild,
Though it is damned in darkness to abide,
Knows for thy kind one punishment alone:
The virgin who has thrown herself away
Is given the choice of throttling herself; else
The women lash her naked through the farms
And village-steads until in shame she dies.

GERSUIND

[*With harsh violence.*
Ay, and like lecherous she-wolves practice shame
With their own husbands. In the lust for death
Insatiable as in the lust of love
For which they slaughter others.

KARL

Whose wild words
Are these, Gersuind, which thou repeatest there?

GERSUIND

[*Defiantly and rudely.*
The words of my own language do I speak!

KARL

Ay, but whose thoughts?

GERSUIND

Who need have told me that
Women are senseless as the wolves themselves?
The veriest dullard of a man knows that!

KARL

Gersuind, who art thou? Mine eyes do not trust
Mine ears, nor do these trust mine eyes at all.
Mine eye tells me most clearly: She's a child
To whom a man might lightly give a doll;
But mine ear counsels: She is a woman grown
And learnèd in the woes of womanhood!
Speak, from which sense shall I receive the truth?

GERSUIND

[*Laughing.*
Give me a doll, a little doll! Ay, give!
But do not think that fifteen years o' the world
Are fifteen days by a blind kitten lived.

KARL

What shall be done? Most clearly do I see
Thine actions are not thoughtless, childish, blind,
But knowingly and resolutely seek
The evil out. Is Excambald then right?
Dwells there a demon in that lovely house
Of gold and ivory which is thy form
And thrusteth forth its master and its God?
I look upon thee and can grasp it not!
Why must this vessel of high loveliness
Instead of holding precious ointment, be
The home of horror and corruption.

GERSUIND

Strange. Are not men the strangest creatures,
truly?
Each man who took me spoke the self-same words
Accusing me for what I gave to him.
[*She gives* KARL *a swift, sidelong glance and suddenly throws her arms about his neck.*
Old man, be not so foolish!

KARL

[*Without stirring.*
If I were
Mere Rico, count of Maine, swift would I loosen
Those arms, thou little wanton, from my neck.
But I am only Karl the emperor
And in this matter cannot equal him.

GERSUIND

[*Standing on the base of a column and still holding her arms about* KARL.
Ye make so many words — ye men! Be still,
And take in quietude the good one gives you.

KARL

Be silent, bastard of a saint, begotten
By a foul satyr on her innocent sleep.
Go! Have compassion! For my reason faints
And all my might of majesty before
The thin-lipped wreathing of thy scarlet smile!
What hinders me from pressing my dark hand
On that white throat until thy power is dead
And nothing but the sweet, chaste, faultless form,
Wronged nevermore by thy accursèd soul,
Lies lovely in my arms?

[*In a passionate struggle with himself, about to succumb, he thrusts her fiercely from him.*

GERSUIND

Ai! Ai! Thy fists
Are rude and strong and hard and hurt me sore!

[*Turning his face from her* KARL *stands still, breathing deeply, striving to conquer himself.* GERSUIND *slinks aside and watches him, chafing her wrists. After a brief pause he speaks.*

KARL

Harsh force must help where admonition falls
Fruitless! Force exercised paternally
But quite inevitable. No punishment
Will fall on thee whom I gave leave to sin,
But upon those who did misuse thy youth!
Thus will my men at arms find work, my hangmen
Find that wherewith to glut their gallow trees.
Give me their names! Behold, here is my stylus,
And here a tablet covered with fresh wax.
Names! Give the names of those voluptuaries
Who in the shadow of my palace sinned
Beneath my very dome against thy girlhood!
Give me those names, Gersuind, and I will scrawl
them
With heavy hand upon my tablet here
And set down after each name: He must die!

GERSUIND

[*Beside herself, but with the violent courage of terror.*
Thou shalt not do this thing! Nay, thou shalt not!

Nor will I ever name the name of one
Who, in his kindness, did the thing I craved.

KARL

Then will I write down Rorico of Maine!

GERSUIND

[*With vulgar scorn.*

Ay, write that name! It matters not to me
To see one blind fool blindly strike another.

KARL

'Tis well, Gersuind. If I unleash my pack,
It will not tarry to pursue the prey.
Instead of many, name the one to me
Who gave thee more, was more, than any other!

GERSUIND

And him thou probably wilt crucify?

KARL

Nay, he shall live and thou shalt be his spouse!

GERSUIND

[*In swift fear.*

Nay, nay! I cannot take for all men — one!

KARL

[*Visibly relieved.*

Thou knowest neither men nor yet one man
Gersuind, and for the first time the young down
Upon thy temples seems in place. Now first
There seems to rise from that poor soul of thine
The evil mists that hid it hitherto.

[*Ever more nobly and more paternally.*

Not yet thy glance can find me; still thy soul

Blinks in the brightness, half awakened only
To groping twilight. But once let the beam
Of that new day which thou art destined to,
Break full and clearly from its bursting bud,
Then in the radiance of a dawning light
Will thy true spring-tide rise upon thy soul.
Have patience, Gersuind! He who will not wait
Till the full berry of the grape is ripe —
His teeth with the sour wine are set on edge.
Thou knowest not thyself and far less me!
Both do I know, yet will I not withdraw
The hand of my protection from thy head.
And why? The great sage Alcuin holds the ant
Worthy of contemplation, on a straw
He carries home the small thing two long miles.
'Tis well! For do I fear? Am I in dread
Of ants? Did I not set victorious foot
On nations of them? Did I not fight to death
And to subjection thy unruly folk,
And shall I now take flight from thee alone?
Behold this manor and its gardens thine!
Thy homeless soul shall here find home at last.
Here shalt thou slowly grow in grace and bloom,
And put forth fruits in ripeness, tended well
By a wise gardener's hand. Be merry here,
Untroubled in the shadow of these walls!
Thou shalt be mistress of thy maids, well served
With costly garments and with gold and gems,
And all delight that thou commandest! Only
One thing. . . .

GERSUIND

[*Swiftly.*

As favourite flower of the king
I must stand still within the bed assigned.

KARL

Knowest thou his favourite flower?

GERSUIND

Ay, in truth!
A little girl of seven, myself I planted
Mallows, in reverence of Karl the king.

KARL

[*Ever more greatly, purely and paternally.*
That reverence is lost! For, hadst thou it,
Thou wouldst not lose it for thine inmost self.
Thou wouldst repel dishonour from the clear
Image of God's own Mother which thou art.
Oh, thou wouldst fear to soil the treasure chaste
Of the high Queen of Heaven with the touch
Of ruthless hands impure! O Gersuind:
About this manor healing springs rise up
Which draw all ill from the corrupted body
And expiate all blood! And in my heart
The hot and healing wells have risen — wells
Of pure paternal love! I feel them run
Resistlessly for thee. Oh, haste to cleanse
Thy soul, to bathe it till 'tis clean indeed!
For though thou be with sin and blemish sown,
Yet shall there come an hour when I shall say,
If thou to my cleansed will canst but submit:
Go, show thyself unto the priests! And on
That day shalt thou in face of all the world
Be the immaculate flower of heaven, be
The lily held in Mary's moveless hands.

[*He has laid his right hand on* GERSUIND'S *head; she kisses his left hand.*

THE THIRD ACT

The scene is once more the country-seat of the king at Aix-la-Chapelle. It is a room in the interior of the villa. The vaulted roof is upborne by columns; the floor is of manicoloured marble. Doors, some open and some closed, lead into the interior of the house: one leads into the garden. From another room, built on a lower plane, Master Alcuin *and* Count Rorico *mount by several steps into this chamber.* Alcuin *is an aged man, tall and of noble bearing. In him are blended the scholar, poet and man of the world. His garb is clerical.*

Rorico

No farther may I lead thee on, good master,
And at a signal which the warder gives,
Whether you have seen the emperor or not,
From house and garden I must send thee straight.

Alcuin

Even though a writing of the emperor's hand
Has called me hither?

Rorico

Thou wast summoned here?

Alcuin

Most surely, count. Were it not so I would

Be sitting peacefully among my books,
Careless and quite incurious as before,
Guarding my mind against all rumours wild.

[*He speaks with gentle archness and always amiably.*

What are these mighty secrets that ye have?
What masquerades are going on, Sir count?
Why does the mighty swinger of the club,
The emperor keep himself hidden here?
For truly, to approach this wilderness,
On narrow paths through marshes that enclose
This island and this house, a man must brave
Dangers that are not slight. Meantime men say
That beasts of prey are everywhere astir;
Hence there is need that our great Heracles
Shake but a little his lion's skin, instead
Of sitting o'er the spindle — to what end?

Rorico

We have come here for the hot baths that rise
At the foundation of this house. Our lord
Bathes in them, calling them the founts of youth.

Alcuin

What calls he founts of youth?

Rorico

The steaming springs.

Alcuin

Right and quite rightly understood, dear count.
Well do I know our excellent patriarch!
Have I not seen shepherds of sheep — not nations —
In fear of age that made them cold and stiff,

In entrails of the yearlings bathe their feet?
The supreme shepherd of both gods and men
Zeus, spite of youth eternal, froze at times.
The fear of age o'ertook him and he felt
Younger, 'tis strange, when he assumed the steer!
The founts of youth? Why not? Our man of men!
May they bring healing to our mortal Zeus,
And may he grasp among his many lambs . . .
Or — bathe him where he would — I meant to say.

RORICO

Since thou art summoned here, most reverend sir,
Rest thee a while. There went forth yet another
Summons unto our chancellor Excambald,
Which seems of excellent omen unto me!
For otherwise — there is no leech to heal.
I dare not speak and would not, by my troth!
My vision does not span our mighty lord,
And thus my wisest plan is to obey.
Yet look on him! No youth the bath has brought!
Behold, upon the terrace sounds his step.

[RORICO *withdraws swiftly.* ALCUIN *throws another glance at his garb and stands in waiting. A Moorish servant opens the garden-door from without and lets* KARL *pass him into the room. The emperor is paler than is his wont. His glance has lost in repose and determination. He comes with the bright light of day behind him, so that he is preceded by his tall shadow. He notices* ALCUIN *and holds his hand over his eyes as though to sharpen his vision.*

KARL

I cannot yet see clearly who thou art.

ALCUIN

But thou, O unmistakeable, art David!

KARL

And Flaccus thou!

ALCUIN

Ay, the same feeble Flaccus
Whom thy rude warriors in the forest stationed,
Who guard their king as though his castle stood
In hostile territory, deigned to spare.

KARL

Ah, Flaccus, in an enemy's land is man
As long as men are round about him!
[*He claps his hands.*
Rest!
Haroun-al-Rashid claps his hands and straight
Grow Paradises out of nothingness.
I am no magian, only a rough Frank
Who can but offer thee thy favourite wine
And some plain country-fare of roast or boiled
To ease thee for the fear that thou hast felt.

ALCUIN

[*Laughing.*
A modest man like Flaccus asks no more!
[*Two Saracen slaves in manicoloured turbans appear and kiss the earth before* KARL.
[*Glancing at the slaves.*
Thy poverty I also can endure.

KARL

Hassan, prepare a feast fit for the gods.

[*The slaves, who have arisen, throw themselves once more upon the earth, arise and withdraw.*

ALCUIN

Not despicable is thy magic, lord.

KARL

Ah, had I it! I have it not. Four slaves
Like unto these the Caliph sent to me
Together with six dusky female slaves.
Almost I had forgotten them, of late
An idle whim made me recall them here
Unto my service. Only now I learn
To honour rightly the imperial gift.
For they prepare thy bath, wind thee about
With linen, knead thee, fly at thy desire,
And serve thy body's need beyond all praise!
'Tis enervating if thou wilt; they are
Weaklings by nature. I am not, my friend.
But hear, in brief now, why I called thee here.
Wert thou not born in far Northumbria
Of Saxon blood and lineage?

ALCUIN

Ay, king David.

KARL

Then soon within this house thou'llt hear a soul
Living and speaking that's akin to thine.
But thereof later. What I need in thee
Is not the Saxon's but the brother's heart —
The man of equal insight, equal worth!

And that art thou, my Flaccus, wielding still
The spiritual sword which God Himself
Did leave behind him in this world. That sword
Didst thou assume, as I the temporal,
And thou art Peter's heritor to me —
More than the Roman! For in things divine
And in things human thou hast knowledge of
God's wisdom high, given to thee alone.
Therefore art thou the man most welcome here
To understand, not judge! One who desires
To honour life, not to extinguish it!
For did I care to cast aside the weight
Of my humanity, I needed but
An empty cloistral cell in which to breathe
And not the breast of brother or of friend.
Thou art my friend in truth, my Flaccus! Well,
Strange things are happening to me! People say
Perhaps. . . . I know not truly what they say.
I only know that there is that within me
Which fills me like an aging tree with sap
Anew as from a thousand springs of life!
Perchance this is ridiculous enough,
And mocks this untamed peasant's head of mine
And all men's goodly, seasonable rules.
For think: an old tree, bare and thin for long,
Sucked dry by parasites to whom its trunk
Yet gives a slight support that they may still
Be fruitful in the light of the great sun —
That old, dead tree puts forth new foliage now!
There is a stirring in the little leaves
O' the parasite: Behold, the old fellow would
Live for himself and not for us alone!
Well — so it is! The old, superfluous fool
May have good cause to be ashamed. 'Tis true
Nevertheless, that he would live once more.

ALCUIN

O thou great David of our table round
Which, radiant with the spirit's seven gifts,
Exalted above all mere mortal things,
Surrounds thee as the gold the flaming gem . . .
What are we lacking thee? Dost thou not wield
The plough, the stylus and the sword at once?
Thou summonest forth what rests in the deep earth!
That which would live in peace thou nourishest
And still protectest! That which is above
Thou honourest — sower of the Saviour's seed!
The child lisps "Karl" ere its own father's name;
Karl is not Karl — the word spells might and strength.
Two neighbours quarrel? Karl! The quarrel's done!
Great nations are at war? Karl! There is peace.
The whole world rests in quiet? Karl! The earth
Thunders, the welkin darkens, and thy name
Means no more peace and quietude, but war!
Who would presume to master thy desires?

KARL

That men should master me — I fear it not.
I am too much the rough, unruly Frank,
And if, in armour, I assume my shield
Scarcely will any spear reach to my skin.
But I am vulnerable in my trust,
Where I reveal my soul without disguise
And show the tenderness that lurks beneath
The roughness of my mere exterior self.

[*The Saracen slaves have brought in a cov-*

ered table. Others hold golden pitchers and ewers.

I was a little lonely here. Come now
And seat thee!

[*He and* Alcuin *sit down at the table. The slaves pour water over their hands.*

Look, my solitariness
Was very dear to me, and yet I lacked
Not friends, as well thou knowest, but — one friend.

[*He raises his beaker and silently drinks to* Alcuin's *health. The latter responds. A brief pause ensues. Then* Karl *says.*

Fair company I'll call, if thou desire.

Alcuin

[*With delicate courtesy.*

Were Horace to invite Anacreon,
The Grecian would await such goodly things
As wine, as song, as beauty above all!

Karl

Well said, old pagan! But I bid thee gird
Thy heart with stoutest armour round about.

[*He strikes upon a disk of metal which one of the slaves holds. Scarcely has the sound died away when* Gersuind, *hurrying in, stands before the two men. She is lightly and fantastically clad. Her hair is open.*

Gersuind

[*Starts back as she sees the two at table.*

Ye are eating? Fy!

KARL

Fy? Must not man be nourished?

GERSUIND

It irks me to see people eat.

KARL

What? People?
Are we mere common folk?

GERSUIND

What are ye more?

ALCUIN

One of us two is more; and hence thou errest!

KARL

To her all men are people merely; and
Unhappily all people are men too.

GERSUIND

What more? I do not love my kind at all.

ALCUIN

Save, let us hope, our lord the king himself,
The honoured and beloved of all men.

KARL

Friend, she excepts no one, so help me God!
Ay, if I were a field-fare and could sing,
Or else a kitten, blind and whimpering,
Then might I hope for some small tenderness.

GERSUIND

[*Greedily gazing about her.*
And have ye naught for me?

KARL

[*Offering her his beaker.*
Wine?

GERSUIND

Horrible!

KARL

She feeds upon the dew of orange blooms,
Or rose-leaf water, at the most, well cooled
In snow, even as the dusky slaves prepare it.
We feed Angora goats, for her small mouth
Slakes its thirst only with their delicate milk.

ALCUIN

So it is nectar and ambrosia
With which thou nourishest thy flower of life
Like the Olympian gods, and truly thou
Seem'st not of mortal substance to be formed.

KARL

She is of mortal substance — never fear!

GERSUIND

Ay! Call me not a saint, whate'er ye do!
For I would rather be all things than that!
I eat, I drink, I follow my desires
Spite of all other wills; let others do
Equally what they can and what they would.

KARL

And if the others would that righteousness
Prevail and that good deeds . . .

GERSUIND

What's that to me?

KARL

Ah, my wise Flaccus, try thy wisdom out!
Summon the long experience of thy years,
The knowledge gathered with untiring zeal,
The wisdom conquered in the endless nights,
Thou, the insatiable of work and light!
See if the spirit in God's wisdom tried,
And in the heat of all the arts of man
Avail thee lest thou stand before this child
Helplessly gaping like the unlettered hind?
To me she long has proved my ignorance!

ALCUIN

Can Flaccus venture where Augustus feels
Spite the Heraclean laurel round his brow
Quite powerless. But I am at thy bidding!

KARL

Then let us teach thee. . . . Let us ask at once
What sin is?

GERSUIND

There is no such thing as sin.

KARL

And modesty! Question her of that next!

ALCUIN

Ay, tell me, maiden, what is modesty?

GERSUIND

[*First laughs to herself, then quite frankly.*
I am no child of Adam or of Eve;
My ancestors touched not the fatal tree;
I know not what is evil, what is good.

Alcuin

Thou hast not the knowledge making thee as God,
And yet art thou thrust forth from Paradise.
How dost thou hope to gain it in the end!

Gersuind

Trouble thyself but for thyself, O greybeard!
What do ye chatter there of modesty?
Am I to be ashamed of my lithe limbs
And in my tailor set my pride perchance?
Are wool or gossamer of silk or fibre
Of linen better than my own fair self
With which I see and hear and taste and breathe?
And though thy daughters walk about adorned
In gold and jewels which I do not want,
Are not they more than the dead stone or ore?
Did not God make me naked? Would ye change
that?
Speak and I'll strip these garments off and leave
Them in my stead to bear ye company!

Karl

Hold! She is capable of doing it, friend!
[Gersuind *has in all seriousness made a motion to strip off her garment.*
What sayest thou now, good master?

Alcuin

I am speechless!

Karl

What arguments hast thou against her words?

Gersuind

[*Throwing aside a long veil with which she has been draped.*

If ye would question, question ye my veil!
'Twill give more pleasing answers than myself.
[*She throws the veil down and, laughing, runs out.*

KARL

Gersuind!
[*She does not heed the call.*
She is gone! Speak: Does her laughter
Sound pleasant to thee?

ALCUIN

Far in Jutland once
Hidden I saw the sacrifice to idols.
It was a bitter night of wintry frost.
The forest pyres burned with a great roar
As of innumerable trampling demons.
A red horse, long of mane, sweeping of tail,
Scarce two years old, was led to sacrifice.
And near the hiding place in which we lay
A naked giant by the halter held
The noble beast destined to fiery death.
Touched by the sudden glow of the red flame
It raised its head. And then it neighed . . . it neighed!
I cannot tell thee how it sounded, whether
Liker wild laughter or a weeping wild.

KARL

Her true self hast thou seen, my Flaccus. 'Tis
Nearer akin to sorrow than to joy.

ALCUIN

The horror of the mystical midnight
Around her breathes, though she seems nothing less
Than a full beam of radiant day itself.

Karl

Forget thou not to eat and drink!

Alcuin

I thank thee!
For sixty long years have I drunk and eaten
In quiet trust that, doing it, I was
Not guilty of a wrong. To-day, to-day
For the first time a doubt assails me sore!
And I reflect: Had I not better fast?
And over many other things I brood
That come into my mind with her strange words
And all that strange thing which she seems and is.

Karl

Now hast thou come where I would have thee, Flaccus!
Many a little beast, as well thou knowest,
With drag-net, bolt or springes have I caught,
But never snared a wild thing like to this.
Therefore I guard it, hold it of high worth.
She, to be sure, is human; thus do I
Practice a nobler calling than the mere
Tamer of beasts; she is in my charge as though
I were the ghostly father of her soul.
And I deny not that I take delight
In proving wisdom with a single soul,
I who have turned the desert bare and bleak
Into rich habitations of good men,
Here too would slowly sow the seed of good.

Alcuin

And scatters she no seed about her?

KARL

Ay!
Difficult is the struggle for a soul,
Deadlier than a fight of swords! The foe
Of God and of all good, he who doth scorch
The desert, sleeps not, sends corroding flames
Into the very heart of Paradise.
I know it well, and yet I take delight
In the grim combat and will face the foe.
Also, it is my fault! . . .

ALCUIN

Lord, thou didst hew
Upon their knees Bavarians, Huns and Saxons,
Normans and Basques and the grim Lombards too,
And who arose before thee crashed to earth!
And yet compared to this exalted plan
Of thy high will, all victory was light.

KARL

Thou art distrustful?

ALCUIN

It were ill to doubt.
Karl were yet Karl, though conquered in this fray.

KARL

[*Arises, his expression grows sombre.*
Dost thou believe that from one trough I feed
With mangy dogs?

ALCUIN

May God's own lightning strike me
If ever such a thought, in sleep or waking
Entered my head.

KARL

'Tis well! Indeed, 'tis well!

[KARL *takes several turns up and down the room. His sudden excitement is allayed.* RORICO *enters.*

What is it, Rorico?

RORICO

The chancellor!

KARL

There is no hurry. Let the old fool wait!

RORICO

He follows at my heel.

KARL

[*To* ALCUIN.

I beg thee then,
That since our goodly feast is broken up
Thou flee a most morose encounter with him.

[*He takes a ring from his finger and slips it into* ALCUIN'S *hand.*

Meantime laugh, exercise thy nimble wit.
There is a ring, a plaything, nothing else,
And into seven rings it falls apart;
Then of the seven canst thou again make one,
And doing so, consider while thou laughest —
Thy laughter's cause a plaything is to me,
No less assuredly and yet no more.

[EXCAMBALD *has appeared. He has heard* KARL'S *last words.* ALCUIN *bows toward* KARL *and withdraws.* RORICO *also goes out.* KARL *strides slowly across the chamber and looks at* EXCAMBALD *with a questioning glance.*

EXCAMBALD

I come in answer to thy summons, lord.

KARL

Thou comest? How? In answer unto what?

EXCAMBALD

[*Very pale.*

My lord imperial did call me hither.

KARL

Ay, true! How stands the matter of that Bennit?
Did not his name run thus? Has his estate
That was unjustly confiscated, been
At last adjudged to him again?

EXCAMBALD

[*With sombre defiance.*

Nay, lord.

KARL

Why not?

EXCAMBALD

Renewed inquiry serves to show
Anew the guilt of Assig and Bennit!
Here is the record of the session held,
Here of the sober judgment of the court,
Only the seal is lacking.

KARL

[*Takes the document and tears it.*

Thus and thus!

Would ye defy me?

EXCAMBALD

What command'st thou?

KARL

Naught!

EXCAMBALD

That is, forgive me, what each faithful soul
In all thy realm regrets with bitterness!

KARL

What? That I issue no commands! Perform
Goodness and righteousness without command!
In the sweat of my brow must I command
Until my very tongue is lame with speech?
The hewers of wood, the drawers of water rest!
Open your slothful mouths! Cry out commands:
Here this and yonder that! Do that, not this!
Not through a single year but a long life
And ye will feel my weariness enow.
What is it ye would have me to command?

EXCAMBALD

Innumerable letters crave an answer.

KARL

From whom? The most important? Name their
names!

EXCAMBALD

His high serenity and king, thy son,
Ludwig of Aquitaine. Here Peter next
Of Pisa! Fulda's abbot next, and then
The Bishops of Cologne, Mayence and Rheims!
In Basle, lord Hildigern! In Besançon
Richwin and others! Letters, too, have come
Urgent and full of care, from Rome!

KARL

And why
Bursts this flood suddenly?

EXCAMBALD

Read them thyself!

KARL

Reports?

EXCAMBALD

Lord, matters of state, momentous, high
Can make no progress, linger where they are!
A dire stagnation is upon us! Also,
In strangest wise a rumour makes its way
To the remotest corners of the land!
And it has gone even to our enemies.
Also our ally, Alphonse of Gallicia
And the Asturias, though he is in doubt,
Makes mention of the whispering he has heard.

KARL

What mentions he? Of what is he in doubt?

EXCAMBALD

No easy matters to repeat, my lord.

KARL

Then let it be! What more?

EXCAMBALD

This letter, lord
Fell by the merest chance into my hands.
Pipin thy son did write it and it too
Makes mention of that rumour strange, obscure.
'Twas written to Duke Gelimer whom thou
Unhappily hast overwhelmed with grace.

KARL

Show it!

EXCAMBALD

An evil plan it speaks of, which
The ill-advised young prince did not repel
With the swift justice which he should have used.

KARL

[*Having read the letter.*

Son of a wanton! Coxcomb! Knave and fool!
Thou writest of an unclean whore who leads
The lame and senile Karl at her foul will!
Thus writes Pipin whom in a tent I made
Stumbling by chance upon a wench who fled,
And whom, when she had given birth to him,
I raised, as 'twere the Saviour, from the manger
And stamped him not into his native mire!
'Tis well! The hunchback would o'erthrow the lame?
Is it for this I am to be annoyed?
Shave me his head and hurl him in a cloister.

[*After a brief pause, quite objectively.*

Let all these lords use their new brooms to sweep
Where'er they would, but let them not come here
Upon the threshold of my country-seat,
Else with my broom of thunder will I fare
Forth in the world with terror as of old.
The hostage Gersuind is of noble blood,
And it is my design to have her married,
Probably to that young prince Friedugis
Whom I will send into some Saxon land
As my pro-consul, he being strong and wise.

EXCAMBALD

[*Involuntarily.*

May God prevent the unnatural attempt!

KARL

What?

EXCAMBALD

To ally him to the girl Gersuind.

KARL

Why not?

EXCAMBALD

Because I fear me for his life
Were this intention once made known to him.

KARL

He'd slay himself?

EXCAMBALD

Ay, lord.

KARL

What, he would flee
This Friedugis, to hasten from my grace
And rather plunge into perdition?

EXCAMBALD

Ay,

KARL

Thou utterest that word with grim intent!
Lives there no countess and no margravine
Who in the ecstasy of sightless youth
Was guilty of evil, evil things as she,
And who now lives, the target of no scorn
In chastity and honour with her lord?

EXCAMBALD

In chastity and honour? I must speak!
Yet how begin? A lady who in youth

Sinned because passion is the mark of youth?
Nay, that is not unheard of, is not new!
Is not unspeakable as Gersuind's deeds!
And heavy is my office at this hour,
For oft have I been judge, but never hangman!
And fear o'ertakes me at this dreadful thing.

KARL

Not me! Off with it! Speak! I mean the head!
We'll cut the throats that tend not unto good!

EXCAMBALD

[Weeping, almost crying out.
Rather bid me be silent, my lord king!

KARL

According to thy chatter, thou shouldst speak!

EXCAMBALD

May God destroy all who deceive the king.

KARL

God will not do that, being merciful,
And having made a covenant of old
With Noah that no second flood shall come.

EXCAMBALD

The flood will come! 'Twill come and whelm my head!
Lord, my knees tremble, give me leave to go.

KARL

Deemest thou that I fear what makes thee tremble?
What is it?

EXCAMBALD

Crime! Lechery! Blasphemous shame!

KARL

Such things have happened since the world began.

EXCAMBALD

But never saw I them so near thy throne.

KARL

Speak clearly!

EXCAMBALD

Spattering never thy purple yet!

KARL

More clearly still!

EXCAMBALD

Never did any one
That's born of woman heap such shame on thee . . .

KARL

As who?

EXCAMBALD

As Gersuind, the hostage, does.

KARL

Thy proofs?

EXCAMBALD

With bitter trouble give I them!
God is my witness. . . .

KARL

Not he alone, I trust!

Excambald

In the night lately fled this came to pass . . .
In a vile tavern by the river bank,
This is what came to pass — this and naught else!
I, Excambald, in sack-cloth garments, I
The chancellor crept there unknown to men
Because the rumours like a maelstrom swol'n
Spurred almost to rebellion on thy folk!
Naught did I hope to see and saw — too much!
I found the rumours tepid, toothless, tame!
I saw Gersuind, naked! Ay, she was clad
But in the floating tresses of her hair
Which flowed about her like a living glow
And sea of fire that had its ebb and flood!
And in that sea with twittering laugh she danced
And her white limbs flashed in the eyes of men.
The topers roared: Fishers, apprentices
From near Saint Mary's, plasterers and Italians
Who brought the statue of Theodoric
From far Ravenna. Thou hast seen it not.
They cried and sang and screamed, gave her the name
Of the king's wanton, the while she did lift
Alternately her smooth knees in the dance,
Till by the luring of her pallid mouth
Awakened — I myself could scarce withstand
The vile enchantment of druidic charms —
A storm infernal broke about us there!
Lord, let me gain my breath!

Karl

Do so!

Excambald

'Tis true!

Ay, it is true that thou art Karl the king
I Excambald, nor do I speak in madness.
I speak the truth. What happened then, is this:
Let me remember! Suddenly, at one blow
The Prince of the Abyss was with us there!
My brain reeled! They tore her from the table
And now one grasped her, now another . . . panting,
Wild trampling sounded! Curses rent the air!
They hurled Gersuind to earth; strands of her locks
Were wound about their calloused fists, they thrust her
Hither and thither, wreaking on her their lust. . . .
The light went out; I saw not what they did,
Till deathlike, waxen, on the floor she lay.

Karl

Unless thou jestest, Excambald, thy words
Mean that this thing took place with whom?
Surely not with the hostage in mine house?

Excambald

With the same hostage whom thou keepest here.

Karl

And when this came to pass, didst thou stand still?

Excambald

I was benumbed! Naught did I nor could do!
When last that grave did open — for it was
A grave of dark and silence round about
Suddenly — When I came to myself again,
There lay she with contorted limbs, she lay
Rigid as death and icy to the touch.

KARL

[*With mighty self-mastery.*

And yet she lives and breathes and is not dead,
And hence thy story clearly has a gap!
Enough! Mere chatter! Speak of weightier things!
Speak of the shipwrights of whom I have need,
Of all those things for which thou earn'st thy bread
And wearest thy garb of office, not of what
Old country wives relate in idleness.

[*He calls aloud.*

Rorico! Go! Rorico!

[RORICO *appears and* EXCAMBALD *withdraws.*

Hither, guards!
Rascals! Have I no guards at call! Come hither!
Curs, do ye sleep? Would ye do naught but feed
And sleep? Have I no guards! Watch ye asleep?
He lies! Bring me the Saxon hostage hither!

RORICO

She sleeps.

KARL

She sleeps?

RORICO

Thus saith the serving maid.
Gersuind desired to cut grapes in the garden,
Scarcely beginning, she did fall asleep.

KARL

Slept in the vineyard? Where, then, lies she now?
In the garden?

Rorico

Nay, in her bedchamber.
Her tiring women brought her thither straight.

Karl

Then tear her from her couch and bring her here!

[Rorico *hastens out.* Karl, *alone, is suddenly overwhelmed with confusion, almost with madness.*

Stones! Ah, my shield! The very air grows dark!
Missiles and stones! They are hurling stones at me!
Ah, scoundrels, myriad-handed! Each one strikes!
Ay, that one too! Would ye stone me to death?

[*It is with an effort that he keeps himself erect.* Gersuind *appears, suddenly awakened from her sleep, yet sharply and cunningly observant. Holding himself erect with iron energy,* Karl *gazes long into* Gersuind's *eyes. Finally the words wring themselves from him.*

He lies!

Gersuind

Who slanders me does lie indeed.

Karl

Witch, dost thou speak? Who bade thee speak? Who bade thee
With such a voice and with such words thyself
Deep to reprove and to accuse?

Gersuind

I . . . me?

KARL

[*To* RORICO.

Close me the gates!

[RORICO *withdraws to carry out the command.*

Now justify thyself!

GERSUIND

I? Justify myself? Did I do more
Wrong that what openly I have confessed?

KARL

Ay, so men say! And if thou cleansest not
Both thee and me from infamy and ordure,
I'll wipe thee from the living face of things
Like a vile blot upon a human world.

GERSUIND

[*With frivolous impudence.*

Why, may I ask? I like not to confess!

KARL

[*Cries out.*

Guards!

GERSUIND

[*Gazes about, seeking help, like a wild animal at bay. Since no escape seems possible, a wild fear suddenly overtakes her. She hastens to* KARL *and covers his hands, his arms and his garment with kisses.*

Let me live! Oh, let me live, King Karl!
Mercy! I crave thy mercy! Let me live!

KARL

[*Thrusting her back.*

Thou scum!

GERSUIND

[*As before.*

Oh, let me live! Oh, let me live!
Put heavy chains about me, O King Karl!
Let no man see me but thyself alone,
And no one touch me! Do thou put the chains
About me, O sweet father, and do thou
Like a great cherub loosen them at last!

KARL

All these things shall another do instead!
Not I.

GERSUIND

Who, then?

KARL

Another one! Enough!
Yet ere I beckon — ready doth he stand
That other whom thou may'st call "father,"
"lord,"
If so it please thee, greater he than I —
Ere that I beckon him who loosens chains
And forges others indissoluble,
Confess the sin which thou hast sinned to me.

GERSUIND

Ah, thou wouldst have me slain.

KARL

[*Firmly.*

That would I do.

GERSUIND

[*With sudden boldness.*

And wilt thou tell me wherefore I must die?

KARL

Too late for all denial now — too late!
Denial first and then confession — well!
The other way, O wanton, helps thee not!
Thou didst beguile the watchmen in the night?

GERSUIND

Who says that I beguiled them?

KARL

I, myself!

GERSUIND

Wherefore should I beguile the watchmen? Call
The serfs! Ay, let them come and question them!

KARL

So with thy foul, obliterated coin,
Didst thou, vile outcast, buy the watchmen's silence?

GERSUIND

[*With sudden rage.*
Why didst thou drag the outcast in? Why didst thou
Not let me lie where I had made my bed?
Why liftedst thou me up, unsought, unbidden?
I made no plaint, I cried not, called thee not!
I threw myself not at thy royal feet
Beseeching thee to raise me from the dust!
But thou didst grasp me and didst hold me tight!
Why? Wherefore was it? Seeing that thou didst
Jeer at me only and desire me not!
I do not want thy jeers, nor yet that glance
Which falling on me still accuses me,

Or rests on me in horror ill restrained.
I would not have thy prison and thy cage,
Which shuts me out from life itself, from God,
From the divinity of mine own fire!
For I must burn or else lie cold in death.

KARL

[*Sombre.*

With me art thou acold . . . and so thou diest!
Thou art impatient then.

GERSUIND

Ay, who delays,
Feeding me with mere words, he loves me not!
Delay but makes me famish, he who lets
Me thirst and hunger gives me bitter pain,
And makes me solitary and unloved,
And lets me stand a stranger, terror stricken,
And weighted with the weight of loneliness.
He who delays ere to his breast he takes me
Precedence gives to the old murderer Death
Who cheats us of the little all we have!

KARL

[*Regards the breathless girl silently for a while. Then he speaks slowly.*

Thou hast made me very still and very mild.
So mild that single death will not suffice
Which thou hast suffered in the king's house here.
It needs no second death to slay thee quite!
Unsummoned Death will come upon thee swift
In time of his own choosing, as thou sayest.
Now go.

[GERSUIND *does not move.*

Thou shalt be taken to thy home

Thy God — the horrors that thou honourest!
There seek thy mire, nor ever think of me!
[*He has turned away from her; she remains standing movelessly before him.*
Art thou still there? We have a lash for such . . .

GERSUIND

Beat me!

KARL

I am no gaoler!
[*He calls out into the garden.*
Flaccus! Flaccus!
[*He claps his hands and the Saracen slaves enter.*
Come, clear the table! Sweep me clean the house!
Bring to us nobler wine and better food!
[ALCUIN *enters from the garden.*
Now art thou truly welcome to me, friend!
The air is pure, my breast is free! We have
No longer unclean spirits, as our guests!
No longer does corruption's breath make foul
The wine's aroma to our thirsting lips.
The horses, Rico, and the hawks! But first
Let us carouse in goodly Frankish wise
And fill our bellies with the healthful meats!
Then — with a huntsman's hail — unto the chase!

ALCUIN

Here is thy ring, King David, back again:
I could not fit the seven parts into one.

KARL

[*Takes the ring.*
Thou art weary of the plaything?

[*Contemptuously he throws the ring down. It rolls at* Gersuind's *feet.*

So am I!

Gersuind

[*With lightning-like rapidity she picks up the ring and hides it.*

He who would have it must first take my life.

[*She runs out.*

THE FOURTH ACT

A hall in the cloister on the lea, vaulted ceilings, a staircase, corridors that cross each other, an open loggia. A week has passed since the happenings of the preceding act. It is late afternoon.

GERSUIND *reclining in an armchair shows traces of severe illness in her face. The* SISTER SUPERIOR, *busy dressing a doll, keeps her company. The sick girl has been so placed that she can enjoy the warmth of the autumnal sun as it enters through the loggia.*

THE SISTER

Who gave to thee that jewel strange, that ring?

GERSUIND

I have told thee that my mother gave it me.

THE SISTER

Then dost thou well to hold it precious.

GERSUIND

Ay,

And so I do indeed.

THE SISTER

I see thou dost.

GERSUIND

I carry it ever near my heart, dear sister.

THE SISTER

And yet thou never knewest thine own mother.

GERSUIND

Thinkest thou the ring is from my mother?

THE SISTER

Ay,

Thou saidest so and I believed thee.

GERSUIND

Oh,

I speak untruth at times.

THE SISTER

And didst thou lie?

GERSUIND

Ay, sister.

THE SISTER

Then whose gift is the strange ring
Thou hast?

GERSUIND

His gift.

THE SISTER

But whose?

GERSUIND

The emperor's.

The Sister

Whose gracious kindness thou hast ill repaid?

Gersuind

One can well see how credulous thou art!

The Sister

Fy, Gersuind!

Gersuind

Thinkest that I would hold dear
Karl's ring nor throw it from me straight?

The Sister

In truth,
Thus shouldst thou love it and thus hold it dear.

Gersuind

Indeed? Oh, thou art very wise, but give
My doll now, sister!

The Sister

Not until thou dost
Confess when for the first time that strange fear
And that sharp fever shook thee and what cause,
According to thy thinking, brought these forth.

Gersuind

How do these things concern thee and the rest?

The Sister

Thou art not obedient! Why did the wise leech,
Why did our kindly mother abbess ask
When first there came that horror to thy breast
Strangely and softly, of which thou hast told?
To heal thee! For the evil's cause being known

Sooner may proper remedies be given
To heal thee.

GERSUIND

I would have all as it is!

THE SISTER

What wouldst thou?

GERSUIND

I would hurt you all, all, all!

THE SISTER

I must believe that, for thou sayest it hourly.
But rather tell me who gave thee this hurt,
Who in that evil night gave thee the draught
That is the cause of all this ill to thee.

GERSUIND

Like to our emperor Karl he had long hair
And white, and therefore did I drink the draught.

THE SISTER

What was the taste of it? The hue?

GERSUIND

'Twas wine!
And yet I know not, so repulsive was it.

THE SISTER

Where happened this?

GERSUIND

Ever thou askest where?
And when and what and who? I know it not!

THE SISTER

I am a woman like thyself, Gersuind!
Speak freely: If for love of that strange man
Who but resembled him, thou drank'st the draught
Repulsive, why then did thy violence spill
Karl's gracious goblet filled with good and love?

GERSUIND

Give me the doll, sister! Dost thou not hear?

THE SISTER

And when the mixture thou hadst drunk in pity
Of the old man who offered it to thee . . .?

GERSUIND

[*Impatiently.*

Then was the draught as evil as before
And quite as horrible unto the taste.

THE SISTER

And fever seized thee?

GERSUIND

I was a little cold

THE SISTER

And if that old man met thee as before
Then wouldst thou know him, Gersuind?

GERSUIND

[*With decision.*

I would not!

THE SISTER

All his aspect thou hast forgotten then?

Gersuind

I see him clearly as though he stood here.

The Sister

And yet thou wouldst not name him nor report
Even though he stepped before our very eyes,
The man who made thee weak and sick and wretched?

Gersuind

Nay, for I am not wretched! Were I so,
As I am not, I tell thee once again,
Then would I name him straightway — but I am not.
Come warm my hands a little, warm my body.

[The Sister *looking with grave anxiety into* Gersuind's *face winds a heavy cloth about her hands. Almost unconscious* Gersuind *leans back her head.* The Abbess *enters softly.* Count Rorico *follows her just as he has come in from the street.*

The Abbess

It is impossible, count Rorico!
Behold! Convince thyself! She is as helpless
As a poor infant, needy of all care.
Not a day's journey would her strength endure.

Rorico

Yet must she go, O venerable mother.
Time presses! I have dared too much e'en now!
Yet on that morning when our lord and king
Aweary of his strange autumnal mood
Hurled her aside as though she were a midge,
I had not the heart to do but what I did.

THE ABBESS

And thou didst right, count Rorico, in truth!
And like a noble gentleman didst thou
Act in accordance with the imperial order
Which we keep safely in our treasury.
Thus didst thou act in bringing home this lamb.
A ruler may forget his word, for great
The circle of his cares and agitations!
The child to whom 'twas given may forget it,
For youth is full of light forgetfulness!
But the child's guardian, in forgetting it,
Deserves God's anger surely.

RORICO

Tell me then:
How runs the document thou keepest safe?

THE ABBESS

The duty is enjoined upon us even
Unto the ending of her days to give
A home and hearth unto the maiden.

RORICO

Ay,
Thus and not otherwise do I recall it.
But he has driven her from Aix-la-Chapelle.

THE ABBESS

What is there here to expel? Behold her close:
A little heap of wretchedness which soon
The ancient cleanser Death will sweep aside,
To-day or else to-morrow, with naught left
Unless it be our emperor himself
Robbed her of a few strands of golden hair!
[*Weeping.*

Has she not expiated more than all?
For I will tell thee now a secret thing:
She has been given poison! Ay, 'tis true!
O human creatures, men! Is't not enough
That ye her tender garden plundered quite
Which her child's ignorance did open? Nay,
A race of wolves, ye slew her at the last!
For always are we women foolish, never
Do we behold the cruel wolf in man
Nor evil thought upon the smiling lip.

Rorico

Most loving mother, would that never she
From thy hand's kindly guidance had withdrawn.
Yet is she not thus guiltless. Above all,
Not guiltless in the eyes of Karl the king.
For since this morning he doth dwell again
Here in his palace in Aix-la-Chapelle!
And he is changed, I tell thee, ridges deep
Are graven in his forehead which no man
Beholds devoid of terror and of fear!
His brows are dark, shadowing his deep eyes;
Now and again he lifts a terrible glance,
Remorseless, threatening, not as in other days.
And if Karl learn that not in Saxon lands
But in this cloister Gersuind still doth dwell,
Then are we all in deadliest danger caught.

The Abbess

I practice righteousness and fear no man.

Rorico

Fear Karl, I beg of thee, and hear my counsel!
This very night I will have horses ready
And two most trusty servants who can take

The child unto her kinsmen. It may be
That even now we have lingered far too long,
That we must live to see the hangman's hands
Tear her from us and lead her unto death.
The rumour that she dwells within the city
Spurs on the people unto wild revolt,
The unbridled rabble gathers hourly now
To drag her forth and stone her unto death.

The Abbess

For her last journey she is ready, count!
Oh, once before ye took her from my care,
The pledge which God entrusted unto us.
How did ye take her? How did she return?
A higher power demandeth her to-day,
A heavenly power, and I will guard her well.
The rabble calls her witch, the Saviour who
Befriended children calls her but a child.
But why this senseless fear of thine, for late
Has my confessor brought me news of this —
The emperor's soul is sore oppressed with pain,
Full of humility and deep contrition:
He is not angry, nay, he melts in tears.

Rorico

Karl weeps! Then God have mercy on the Franks!
For when Karl weeps the deed outstrips the word
And execution judgment, not the roll
Of thunder comes before the lightning stroke!
Trust me! For once, at Verdun, Karl did weep
And the brooks overflowed with blood of men.
Karl weeps again, he weeps and sobs at night,
And on the lea behind Saint Mary's church,
While the unfinished building roofless stands,

Thou mayest the terror of Karl's tears behold
With black and swollen tongues and necks awry —
Workmen, the very best, are idling there
On weekdays, their limbs tossing in the wind.

GERSUIND

[*Waking up.*

Sister!

THE SISTER

Well, child?

GERSUIND

I hear one speaking.

THE SISTER

Ay,
Count Rorico is speaking to the abbess.

GERSUIND

Will the king shield me from that bad old man?

THE ABBESS

From what old man?

GERSUIND

From him who yonder stands
And calls me pagan vile and evil demon.

THE SISTER

She means the worthy chancellor Excambald.
The dream that most torments her is the one
Of that momentous morning on which we
Accused and dragged forth by her kinsman Bennit
Appeared before the throne of Karl the king.

Gersuind

And he who speaks, sister, is Rorico,
The emperor's favourite?

The Sister

Ay, the count is here.
Open thine eyes and thou canst see him plain.

Gersuind

[*With closed eyes.*

I see him clear before me as he lives.
Handsome he is, but not by far as Karl!
Karl is a god, we others are but men.

The Abbess

[*To* Rorico.

Wilt thou believe it, sore as she grieved and vexed
him
She honours him as though he were a saint?

Rorico

May He who made her penetrate her heart.

Gersuind

I cannot drink the horrible mixture! Oh!
It is nauseating, frightful! Bid him go!

The Abbess

[*Softly.*

They gave her poison on that dreadful night,
In that strange den to which the will of hell
Compelled her. 'Twas a man, unknown and old
Who in a beaker wine gave her her death.

Rorico

Who would believe that such a heavy curse

Lay on that fragile body and soul of hers!
See how she lies there, small and weak! O weakness
Against which arms of steel did not prevail!
Alone she stood, trusting that weakness, even
As Karl the king stands, leaning on his strength!
And thus, like him, is she surrounded now
By enemies, good mother, and sore oppressed,
And I who coldly stood beside her feel
Guiltily guiltless deep compassion now.

[Excambald *enters hastily.*

Excambald

At last I meet thee then, count Rorico!

Gersuind

[*Starts up at the sound of* Excambald's *voice, opens her eyes and stares at him.*
There art thou . . . it is he . . . what wouldst thou now?

Excambald

[*Without taking notice of* Gersuind.
And ye returned straightway, without ado?

Rorico

Ay, his command to travel came at dawn.
Heaven only knows what now he means to do.

Excambald

Hide but the girl, good cousin abbess, swift,
For Karl is on his way unto the cloister.

Rorico

I feared the secret would be told to him.

Excambald

Hide her! Rebellion is fomenting; Karl

Is in a hangman's mood. Though folk and king
Be at swords' points since the rash masons hang,
They are at one in hatred of this harlot.

The Sister

[*Lifting* Gersuind *from the chair. The child still gazes in wild-eyed horror at* Excambald.

Lay fast thy arms about my neck, Gersuind!
The mighty are sinning, our protection lies
With God!

[*She carries* Gersuind *out.* Rorico *helps her.*

Excambald

[*Alone with* The Abbess.

Nay, death itself would have her not.
Ye stand right firmly in the emperor's grace,
Since your compassion seeks this dangerous road.
Spite of her illness, I had rather sent her
Like Freya's kitten home, by drowning her.

The Abbess

[*Looking steadily at* Excambald.

I know that thou hadst rather done so! What
In truth thou didst is known to thee alone;
I know it not!

Excambald

And therefore, cousin, speak
Only of that whereof thou hast the knowledge.

[Excambald *hurries out. From another direction* Alcuin *enters gravely and slowly.*

The Abbess

Blessèd be God who leads thee unto us,
My father! Speak unto thy daughter now
Who is sore pressed and harried on all sides:
Does Karl so hate the piteous hostage? Brings he
Death unto who would pity or succour her?

Alcuin

So it is true? She has found refuge here?
Learn that dark presage in him seeks her here!
His soul, far, far from hatred, is in pain!
And yet this man is terrible, good daughter,
Whether he serve the truth, whether he err,
Whether his eagle glance doth mark his foe
In the remotest hiding; whether he
Blinded by madness goes and lifts his hands
In rage and sorrow against his own head.

The Abbess

Precious thy words to me, good father! Speak
And tell me more! How shall I bear myself?
What shall I say in his high presence? Speak!

Alcuin

Believe that he would see the child again,
And that his whole wild soul cries out for her,
Spite of all things that he may say or feign,
For what has made the festering ill is this:
Had this child been innocent, chaste and true —
Often have we experienced it, my daughter —
All things had gone the usual, ancient way,
We would have seen another emperor's son
And nothing else! What came to pass was this:
Strange she remained, powerless his mastery,

And though his senses begged, nay, whined for her
His pride, unbendable, did hold him back.
And so one day he thrust her from him — her
Who now most terribly in his heart held rule.
The glow suppressed burned on, fiercelier still,
And burned at one with his balked kingly will
And set on fire both barn and threshing floor —
In other words, the very king himself.

The Abbess

And so the king is truly ill?

Alcuin

Most ill!

The Abbess

Where is the leech will heal his ill for us?

Alcuin

She whom he seeks through all the world — none else!
He comes! Listen: The thunder of his voice!

[The Sister Superior *hastens in; with her a second* Sister.

The Sister Superior

Help, help her quick . . .

Second Sister

The emperor enters in!
Mother!

The Sister Superior

Gersuind is calling thee!

Second Sister

The king
Demands thee, mother!

The Sister Superior

Mother, Gersuind fights
For breath, we are in terror lest she die!

Second Sister

What shall I answer when the emperor asks?

The Sister Superior

She would entrust a secret to thee, mother.
She cannot die before she has confessed!

The Abbess

What shall I do?

Alcuin

The destined way is thine!
Go without hesitation, O my daughter!

[The Abbess *follows* The Sister Superior. *Several nuns hasten through the chamber putting things to rights.* Alcuin *holds himself in readiness.* The Emperor, *speaking loudly to his attendants, is heard to approach. From without resounds the thunder of a mob which has gathered at the convent gates. At last* Karl *enters, followed by* Rorico, Excambald, *several attendants and many nuns.*

Karl

[*To the nuns.*
The field behind the buildings shall be yours!

Ay, ye shall hold it on this one condition,
That with your cabbage, lettuce, spinach, kale,
Ye also plant mallows and rosemary,

[*The nuns give expression to their delight, several kissing his hands.*

Where is your mother abbess at this hour?

THIRD NUN

Where is the mother abbess?

FOURTH NUN

Is she not here?

FIFTH NUN

Dear Lord, where is she? We must seek her straight!

[*The nuns hasten helplessly about.*

KARL

My master Alcuin, is not this the room
In which, one day, we kept the convent school?

[*He turns to a nun.*

How many pupils do ye care for now
Here in your cloister? There were thirty once
When I did count them in this very room.

SIXTH NUN

We have again just thirty, my lord king.

KARL

Yet there's a gap ye never can supply.

[*A restless hurrying to and fro is heard in the corridors. A whispering arises among the nuns in the room. Most of them turn pale and withdraw. Two girls, pupils of the convent school, enter*

hastily with burning tapers and try to slip by. Karl *holds them back.*

Karl

Where would ye hasten with your candle ends?
[*Frightened they elude him and vanish through a door.*
Aha, it seems we are superfluous here!
It is damp here and draughty! Close the door!
Why are ye all so pale? What has come to pass?

Alcuin

The moment that thou camest, my good lord,
They called the abbess, for a dying soul
Desired her shriving ere it went away.

Karl

'Tis no good omen that the old kinsman Death
Precedes me here and meets me at the goal!
[*His attention is called by the roaring of the rabble.*
What is it makes yon swarm of bees to buzz?

Excambald

[*Overzealously.*
Learn then at once what thou too soon must know:
The bridge that thou didst build across the Main,
The wondrous structure of the Italian workmen
Is gone. The flood has borne it far away.
The news thereof came and did spread this morn.

Karl

Softly! I know! Also my horse did stumble
And threw me roughly on the earth to-day!
This very day, hard by the city gate.
'Tis well. The longest day draws to a close.

Alcuin

Even as upon each night there follows morning.

Karl

So that naught serves but patiently to wait.
[*Gazing about him.*
And here too patience is our need, it seems.
See what takes place within!

[Excambald, Rorico *and the other attendants of* Karl *obey his command and withdraw. Only* Alcuin *remains behind.* Karl *gives him a look full of meaning and continues.*

And so we are here!
And I will tell thee now what drove me hither.
When thou didst ask me, ah, I knew it not!
A dream: Here on the bench did sit Gersuind
Laughing, and spoke . . . her words have passed from me!
Nay, nay, though I know not her very words,
This was the purport. First I spoke to her:
How is it with my ring, I asked her then.
For since this unhealed madness is upon me,
The ring torments me in the dreams of night.
Thou knowest it! Well: Why didst thou take the ring,
I asked her, and she answered: Come and see!

Alcuin

It seems to me, my lord, as though we stood
Midmost within a blinding cloud that is
Heavy with hidden fate for us! May God
Give us the strength to bear it worthily.

[The Abbess *comes in weeping.*

KARL

[*Goes to meet her.*

Mother, most strange of mood am I to-day
Within thy walls — tossed by a spirit strange,
Almost in dread, despite this sword of mine;
As though it were my ghost that walketh here
The while another king has long held rule!
Yet do I live! Knowest thou me, O Mother?

THE ABBESS

[*Kissing the hem of his garment.*

God bless and succour thine anointed head!

KARL

And tears again from thee, as on that day
I' the palace when we saw each other last?
Leave me alone with our good mother here.

[ALCUIN *withdraws. Pale listening faces of nuns draw away from the doors.*

KARL

Thou comest from a bed of death, I hear.
Who dies, mother, is rid of this hard life!
On us still lies the strange and ancient curse
Of God given to Eve our ancestress,
The curse which still will visit us at times
That the great pain of living perish not —
Visits us with new apples and new guilt.
How long is it since last I saw thy face?

THE ABBESS

Far, far too long for me, thy servant, for
They whom thy grace protects within these walls
And who are orphans in their father's absence. .

KARL

Orphans and father? Does thy thought run thus?
If that ye need a father, look to heaven!
No earthly father is worth half these tears.
Deny it not! Thy tears belie thee! Well,
The pagan Bennit who once lost his lands
Is now a lord in Saxon woods again
And bears him haughtily in his new power!
The right was his! That grieves thee not so sore
O mother, as his second victory
Whereby he won the young soul of a child
From thee and from the Saviour Christ, our Lord!

THE ABBESS

The hostage grew to be a scourge to all.

KARL

'Tis true, and if she grew to be a scourge,
Were I indeed a father, as I am not,
Then would I grieve me day and night, like thee,
Because she lives not in thy pious keeping
But far away by unclean pagan hearths!
Mother, let me confess to thee! Behold . . .
I am here . . . she was thy pupil. . . . Well,
Gersuind . . .
The things that were concerning her thou knowest,
The very palace walls have ears to hear!
'Tis well! The world doth curse her and I thrust
The sinner forth from me into the world
And now am pining with most sour remorse!
Ah, mother, think not I am mad! But think
How bitter his remorse had been if when
Wading across the stream St. Cristopher
Carried the Christ child to the foaming bank
He had abandoned it to the wild waves!

And, mother, the reinless impulse in her was
More than the evil of a harlot far!
It was the devil's sombre slavery!
Often I saw it when the demon touched
Her body white and made of it his prey
And servant of the greedy lusts of hell!
Scarcely, at such hours, did she touch my hand,
But torment showed upon her stony face
While helpless her poor body writhed in woe!
And so, in brief, guiltless or not, her face
Still lures me with the features of a saint,
Deep in me with the glory of innocence
She shines! Is it delusion? Help me, then!
Destroy the aureole that frames her head —
Else will I make her saint of Frankish lands
Praying to the sanctuary from which she smiles!

The Abbess

Dear lord, the providence of God which now
Doubly I honour and adore has saved
Thee and thy soul from such a sin as that.

Karl

Mother, she lures me on; I am not free
But am her prisoner still unto this hour.
Oh, whereby did she bind me then when I
Thrust her so cruelly from me? By what arts?
Was it the ring perchance she stole from me?
I cannot think it out nor name its cause.
But thou must help me loosen this strange charm
That has me in its ban and tortures me.
Thou must fare forth and find her that I may
If so thou find her dead, know who did kill
The soul of her; if living thou shouldst find her,
Perchance, by grace, I need not let her die!

But if thou sayest: "'Tis thou destroyed her, thou
Who knewest not her true life!" Then will I
Straight call my sons together and convene
The great men of the kingdom and disclose
Their lord's last will to them and humbly go
Into a cloister.

THE ABBESS

Gersuind never was
In Saxon lands or with her kinsman, lord!
Here was she and she found her refuge here
Even as through my mouth thou didst promise her.
But she has gone from us a second time
And will not come again forevermore.
The moment that thy foot our threshold touched
Invisibly her spirit fluttered past,
For at that very moment did she die!
She started from her pillows, crying aloud
With voice that made our very blood to freeze
The name of Karl her king and spake no more.

[KARL *stands silent while the roaring of the people at the gates increases. In the background children, bearing lighted tapers, are gathered.* ALCUIN, EXCAMBALD *as well as several nuns enter anxiously.*

KARL

[*In a toneless voice.*

My master Alcuin!

ALCUIN

I am here, my king!

KARL

My master Alcuin!

ALCUIN

I am at thy service!

KARL

Mother, are those sparks of my blood that glow?
Nay, lighted tapers are approaching me!

[KARL *stares at the tapers in the background. It is apparent now that the children form the front ranks of a procession which begins slowly to move forward.*

THE ABBESS

O my lord king and gracious paladin,
Turn thou thy glance and turn thy step away
From this grey deed of the old enemy death.

[*The procession now crosses from left to right and a bier, carried by nuns, appears. On it lies the body of* GERSUIND *covered with a cloth.*

KARL

Still! A dead woman? Know ye who it is?

THE SISTER SUPERIOR

[*Stepping to the bier.*

At peace with God she died within my arms.

KARL

She died? Died in thy arms thou sayest? Who?
Who died? Draw back the cloth! Who made her die?
Why howls the rabble in the square below!
Let be!

[*He approaches the bier with firm steps and himself draws the cloth from* Gersuind's *face.*

'Tis thou, Gersuind? Whither comest thou?

[*The* Emperor *draws himself up but a trembling overtakes him as though a tower were shaken by an earthquake. He falters, raises himself up again and grasps after support which* Rorico *and* Alcuin *offer him. Once more he falters, once more draws himself up, pushes his friends aside and stares at the dead girl.*

Too late! 'Tis strange and wondrous, my good lords. . . .
Ye are astonished . . . I am very calm. . . .
'Tis strange a grief that makes me very calm
Should point the way unto an everlasting
Renunciation. See, her hand is warm!
From here a rosy cloth slipped down and fell
And seemed then to be lying at her feet?
But when ye sought for it, ye found it not!
Thus life departs! Oh, I have seen it oft
And therefore —

[*He fixes* Excambald *with a penetrating glance.*

Excambald, art thou content?
Ay, thou — not I! What happened here is murder!
Come nearer, Excambald, for this is murder!
Silence! Would she not speak? Her breast, I weened,
Did rise a very little! Nearer! Murder!
She sees you and accuses you — of murder!

Rico, set watchmen at the gates and lock
The door, for murder in the convent reigns.

The Abbess

[*Throwing herself down at his feet.*
If murder was done here, my lord and king,
God, the omniscient can witness bear. . . .
If wrong was done unto this child, and she
The victim of some ill and blasphemous deed,
Yet may I raise both hands unto high heaven
In oath! May all damnation come upon us! Lost
Be our eternal weal if any guilt . . .
Ay, of a dust grain's weight, fall upon us!
For in this house no evil touched her head.

Karl

This is no deed of mine that here ye see!
Rico, 'tis common murder! Guard the gates!
Blood shall be paid with blood, for this is murder!
And this dead girl shall lead us! Lead, Gersuind,
And we will follow in thy footsteps, even
Though to my kinsmen thou shouldst lead us on!
We'll stride into their very midst and there
Where'er thy murdered finger points, demand,
And though it were the son of my own loins,
Blood for thy blood!

Excambald

Take mine, my lord and king!
Take mine in peace, the little that is left!
But take it! Ever was each drop of it
Thine all my life, if spilt for thee or not.
But ere I bend my neck and gladly bend it
Beneath the axe, once more I raise mine head
By thy high favour and speak out the truth!

No more art thou with godlike wisdom filled!
A sleep has come upon thee! Locked and sealed
To thee are eyes and ears! Thou seest not
Nor hearest any more! Hearest thou thy folk!
Fear rages in them and a wild despair!
Hear thou their thunder at the cloister gate.
A cry doth rise: The harlot shore his hair!
And they believe a heathen demon sucks
Thy lifeblood in the cloister while the realm
Thy victories have built falls into dust.
'Tis that! And there is rumour on all lips
That with two hundred warships Godofried
The Dane has landed upon Frisian earth,
That he has fallen on the settlements
And razed the mighty towers that thou hast built
And slain or else enslaved the garrisons.
Unheard of such a blow! To victory
The Franks accustomed are confused in soul.
They rage and raise their weapons in their hands,
Thinking the Saxon folk's idolatrous priests
Do lame thee as the Philistines lamed Samson,
Through that Delilah who did steal his strength
By shearing the long locks upon his head.

[*During* Excambald's *speech* Karl *has not taken his eyes from* Gersuind. *More and more strangely attracted by her he approaches the bier, gradually forgetting all about him. The sudden silence of* Excambald *seems to recall him to consciousness.*

Karl

[*With a deep but soft voice.*

Art thou at an end? Go, and leave us alone!
Rico! Rico!

Rorico

Ay, lord!

Karl

Go! . . . Thou remain,
And thou and thou!

[*He has pointed out* Rorico, Alcuin *and* The Abbess *and beckoned the others to withdraw.* Excambald, *the nuns and the attendants, also the children flee at the stern command of his gesture. Slowly the* Emperor *goes close up to the bier.*

Mother, was Satan not
One of God's angels who aspired to be
Like God and fell and thus God thrust him forth!
O unimaginable fall of radiant
Armies to the abyss! Children of heaven
Made of its purest glory who were yet
Unsatisfied and whose great cry rang out,
Whose cry of love rose in the halls of heaven:
Help, Satan, help! We would be like to God!
See ye the dark defiance in her face?
God's might was shattered 'gainst his angel here,
And human might was shattered and mine own!
Now she is dumb, but in my dreams I saw
Her radiant body white, for what I spake
Never to her I say to you this hour:
I loved her.
God fills the universe with his great name:
But she is silent and no echo comes!
Ah, tell me what I know not, why the world
Did burst in two and the crack cleave my heart?
She stands to-day before her heavenly Judge!
What will he say, oh, what oppose unto

The proud and searching silence of her lips?
Will the great King ask her: Where is my ring?
And for her silence slay her, as I did,
Again, that she arise defiant more
Unto new passions and to torment old?
Pain was her portion here, both pain and pride,
As both are mine. And so — a long farewell!
Was she a flake of the infernal fire?
Then think, my lords, of seas of equal fire!
No wonder then that with a singèd heart
The happy spirits to destruction crowd!
'Tis well! I am yours! If her sleep is such sleep
As knows no waking, I have time enough
For your affairs and Godofried, the Dane.

Cries of the Populace

She shore his hair! The harlot shore his hair!

Rorico

At thy command I'll lead my cavalry
And thrust the rabble back!

[Excambald *hastens in.*

Excambald

They'll storm the house!
There's no resisting lest thou show thyself
Once more unto thy people as of old!

Karl

'Tis well! Ere 'tis too late! Go, workman, go
Unto thy work! Forbear with me that I
Took from my duty this brief holiday!
I know that duty, know I am indeed
The necessary serf of our great Lord!
Accuse me not! Have pity! Say no word!
Doubly I'll shed my sweat; I will assume

A yoke of iron, if need be, the strong
Bison will be but feeble unto me.
So lift her up and carry her away!
Ever I must be learning, learn from her
Even that thing her lips would not disclose!
Tell no one that from children still I learn!
Say unto men that Karl the king knows not
What error is! Say to them that he is
Harder than adamant and knows not tears.
See ye the man that follows yon dead girl?
The mass of men knows nothing of this man!
Betray him not but let him go his way!
Not him the people lacks; the ruler old
Remains after that other wight is gone.
And that old ruler — yearns for the open field,
The level field under the boundless sky,
Above him the cloud's thunder and about
Thunder of armaments that fill the world!
He yearns to be astride the warhorse bold,
To rest at night under a wind-blown tent!
Ay, the old war serf whom ye know as king
Cries, as a hart for water, for those storms
In which he breathed the years of all his life —
For clash of arms, combat of men, for war!

[*He has stepped out into the loggia and shows the surging crowd his sword. For one moment there is a stillness as of death. The crowd breaks out in jubilation.*

Cries of the Populace

Hail to king Karl! Cursed be his foemen! War!

Excambald

He raised his sword! Hail! He has raised his sword!